

most illustrious student, the late Ernst Mayr (another Saxon), on the occasion of the 75th(!) anniversary of his doctorate, in a reunited Berlin and in the museum where he had been taught by Stresemann.

It was Erwin Stresemann's wish to be buried beside his own teacher Ernst Hartert, the great custodian of the Rothschild Collection in Tring and the man whom he respected above all others. A single gravestone in the wooded cemetery in Berlin-Dahlem carries their two names. Most of those who wished to attend the funeral were refused permission to cross the Berlin Wall.

**Brian Hillcoat**

RALPH, C.J. & DUNN, E.H. (eds) **Monitoring Bird Populations Using Mist Nets**. 211 pages, *Studies in Avian Biology no. 29*. Cooper Ornithological Society, 2004. Paperback \$23.00, ISBN 0-943610-61-3.

A workshop was held in October 1993 in California on *The use of mist nets to monitor bird populations*, and was attended by many of the leading lights in ringing, demography and statistics. Over 11 years later, the proceedings from the workshop have been published in this special issue of *Studies in Avian Biology*.

The introductory chapter by the editors, Erica Dunn and C. John Ralph, reviews the strengths and weaknesses of mist netting for monitoring purposes and discusses the potential biases in sampling. Eight papers show how mist-netting can be used to monitor abundance, productivity and survival during the breeding season, and draw on examples from the British Trust for Ornithology's Constant Effort Sites (CES) scheme and the North American equivalent Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) project. From a British perspective, three papers use data from the CES scheme. These papers compare trends in adult abundance with those from the Common Birds Census, show how juveniles caught on CES compare well with local productivity (based on nestlings ringed on the same site) and demonstrate how between-year recaptures can be used to estimate adult survival rates. A further 11 papers illustrate how mist-netting can be valuable outside the breeding season, and give examples from studies during spring and autumn migration and from stopover sites.

Three papers listed under 'General Considerations' cover subjects such as using counts of birds ringed as indices to populations, the effectiveness of training ringers at three sites in Canada and the use of capture-recapture models in mist-net studies; this last paper is an excellent summary of this important topic.

Finally, a summary paper from the workshop makes recommendations for the use of mist-nets for inventory and monitoring purposes and highlights the importance of standardized ringing, careful project design and last, but perhaps most importantly, well-trained ringers.

Many of the papers focus on work in North America and Canada with just four papers from Europe; this does not detract from the usefulness of this volume in any way. Given

the long period between the workshop and the production of this volume it is good that the authors were given the chance to update the papers between 2001 and 2003 to include current practices and latest statistical techniques and this certainly adds to the value of this special edition.

This collection of papers will be of interest to researchers at conservation organizations, including the BTO and RSPB, but will also be an invaluable source of references for university researchers undertaking demographic studies of birds. This special volume really deserves to reach a wider audience and the only problem I see for most people will be getting hold of a copy.

**Dawn E. Balmer**

ROOKMAKER, K., MUNDY, P., GLENN, I. & SPARY, E. **François Levaillant and the Birds of Africa**. xxii + 484 pages, 252 colour illustrations including 58 full-page bird plates. Johannesburg: The Brenthurst Press, 2004. Standard edition £225.00, ISBN 0-909079-59-5. De luxe edition £625.00, ISBN 0-909079-60-0.

Even the standard edition, limited to 850 copies, is sumptuously produced – case-bound, with gilded top edge, head and tail bands, ribbon bookmark, the bird plates on 130 g/m<sup>2</sup> paper, endpapers with antique maps, and a large 1790 map of southern Africa folded into an end pocket. It and the de luxe edition, of 150 copies in half leather, hand-marbled papers, hand-sewn bands, rounded spine tooled in gold, must be worth every penny to those fortunate enough to acquire them.

François Levaillant (1753–1824) was a colourful and enigmatic figure, a pioneering naturalist who was the first person ever to sail to far distant shores expressly to study birds: he explored inland from the Cape Colony in 1781–1784. Returning to France with 2000 well-prepared bird skins, he gave dramatic and somewhat imaginative accounts of his discoveries, rapidly acquiring fame as Europe's finest naturalist-explorer. His magnificent *Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux d'Afrique* was produced in six volumes in 1796–1808, but by then his exploits were attracting not only praise but controversy and censure.

Levaillant's main biographers are Quinon *et al.* (*François le Vaillant: Traveller in South Africa and his Collection of 165 Watercolour Paintings 1781–1784*, 2 vols, 1973) and include Slater (*Ibis* 1931), Stresemann (1975), Brooke (1987) and Mearns & Mearns (1988). So why this new book? The Brenthurst Press is the publishing wing of the Brenthurst Library, which possesses a substantial collection of Levaillant's works, including several editions of *Oiseaux d'Afrique* and 'an exceptional pair of volumes in royal quarto format into which are bound 58 original watercolour paintings in addition to the printed monochrome engravings' (evidently by Johann Reinold from Levaillant's originals). The two volumes, published in 1796 and 1799, passed to a French industrialist whose library was auctioned by Sotheby's in 1988, and were purchased by Harry Oppenheimer in 1999 with a view to

'publishing a "bird book" which would include these beautiful watercolours' (so writes Oppenheimer's daughter, Chairman of Brenthurst Press, in her Foreword).

But this book is far more than merely a vehicle for the artwork. Brief biographies of the four authors and the translator – all scholars marrying science and the humanities, with Peter Mundy the only ornithologist – are given on the penultimate page (the last page describes 'The Making of This Book'). A more successful team it would have been hard to assemble. They present not only an interesting commentary on each of the bird paintings but also give a most erudite re-examination, in six lengthy chapters, of this 'flamboyant Gallic adventurer with a cavalier attitude to the truth ... against the backdrop of the world of natural history and its practice in the late European enlightenment. The potent mix of science and commerce is reflected in [his] pursuit of knowledge about the animal kingdom with active trading in specimens ... shrewdly negotiating the dangers, upheavals and transformations of the French revolution and the Napoleonic era to achieve his scientific ambitions.' The chapters treat Levaillant in perspective; his formative years; the African journeys; the merchant-naturalist and man of letters; the production of his bird books; and his cabinet of specimens.

Not all of the paintings are of African birds. Several are of Neotropical species from Levaillant's childhood in Surinam or of European and Oriental ones, and some are unidentifiable because they are clearly contrived composites; hence the 'cavalier attitude to the truth'.

#### C. Hilary Fry

SHUFORD, W. D. & MOLINA, K.C. (eds) **Ecology and Conservation of Birds of the Salton Sink: An Endangered Ecosystem**. *vii + 169 pages, photographs, maps, tables. Studies in Avian Biology no. 27. Camarillo: Cooper Ornithological Society, 2004. \$17.00 US postage included, available from Cooper Ornithological Society, c/o Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, 439 Calle San Pablo, Camarillo, CA 93010, USA.*

An engineering miscalculation in 1905 funnelled water from the Colorado River into the Salton Sink in south-eastern California, thus creating the inland lake we now know as the Salton Sea. The sea and its shores have long been a popular destination for birdwatchers and ornithologists alike, with the spectacle of hundreds of thousands of breeding and over-wintering aquatic birds being of primary interest.

The avifauna of the Salton Sea has commanded substantial interest in recent years due to its rapidly increasing salinity. In addition to the current volume, recent publications include *A Guide to the Birds of the Salton Sea* (B. W. Massey & R. Zembal. 2002. University of Arizona Press, Tucson) summarizing seasonal surveys at spots around the sea, and the comprehensive *Birds of the Salton Sea: Status, Biogeography and Ecology* (reviewed in *Ibis* 146: 180).

Shuford and Molina have included 16 papers involving a total of 34 authors and a variety of topics. There is substantial coverage of the history of the sea and early ornithological explorations. This sets the stage for the other contributions dealing with the current status of birds in the wetlands and adjacent agricultural areas. The importance of the sea and the wider Salton Sink area not only as a breeding site for large numbers of herons and ibises but also as a migration stopover spot and overwintering area for myriads of pelicans, ducks, geese and grebes is emphasized. This volume arose from the concern of four major ornithological societies that scattered information from diverse research studies might be overlooked in the planning process for rehabilitation and conservation of the sea and the interactions of the wildlife resources of the whole region. This resulting compilation provides a wealth of current information, which will be valuable for planners and managers as well as the ornithological community. It is a job well done.

Charles T. Collins

SUTHERLAND, W. J., NEWTON, I. & GREEN, R. (eds) **Bird Ecology and Conservation: A Handbook of Techniques**. *386 pages. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Hardback £55.00, ISBN 0-19-852085-9. Paperback £24.95, ISBN 0-19-852086-7.*

This is an absolutely essential handbook of research methods for new ornithological researchers or conservation ecologists; it also covers many subjects in sufficient detail to be useful to established researchers within other fields. The book collects together 18 separate expert authors, most of them 'household' names in biological research. Fourteen separate chapters deal with subjects including survey techniques, monitoring breeding, survival and migration; catching, handling and radiotracking birds; techniques of post-mortems, physiology and genetics; diet and foraging measurement; habitat assessment and management; and exploitation and conservation management of birds. Obviously with such an inclusive approach most subjects are dealt with in superficial detail, but with clear pointers to the best, more detailed texts: for example, this book may suggest the doubly labelled water approach to you if you have an energetics question, or the appropriate census method if you have an abundance question, but you will have to go elsewhere to learn how to answer your questions properly. But knowing that something can be done, and good examples of how it can be done, are the crucial first steps in any research project; this handbook should greatly increase the use of best ornithological practice worldwide. I expect every research ornithologist, from Masters to Professor level, to get this book.

The series editors are also to be praised for donating free copies of the handbook to libraries and research institutions in the developing world.

Will Cresswell