

Reviews and book notices

Bird sounds of Bolivia (Sonidos de aves de Bolivia). CD-ROM: Version 1.0 (for Windows 3.1/95/NT). Sjoerd Mayer. Wierengustraaf 42, NL-9699 PD Westernieland, The Netherlands. Bird Songs International B.V.

For a sound guide to do justice to an avifauna fast approaching 1370 species, the largest number of any land-locked country in the world, it must necessarily display evidence of high-quality recording across a wide range of families and species. In this regard, this compendium of vocalizations is admirable. It encompasses an impressive 538 species (about 40% of those occurring in the country), including Diademed Tapaculo described only in 1994 and Inquisivi Spinetail found by the author in 1993. Obviously its merit as an identification tool rests particularly on the extent to which coverage is afforded to those groups which present difficulties. That coverage is highly acceptable: e.g. pigeons (15 spp, 63% of relevant species); owls (12 spp, 52%); nightjars (8 spp, 40%); woodcreepers (15 spp, 77%); ovenbirds (44 spp, 45%); antbirds (51 spp, 55%, including antthrushes and antpittas: 10 of the 16 relevant species included); tapaculos (8 spp, 89%); tyrant-flycatchers (77 spp, 38%). Six endemics (of 16), and five threatened and 12 near-threatened forms are incorporated. The majority of species are represented by more than one audio-cut (maximum of 10), although the playing times of individual cuts vary enormously (5–248 seconds). Browsing through these cuts proved both entertaining and instructive. For example, the raucous, trumpet-like calls of Hooded Mountain-toucan, the metallic, almost frog-like notes of Mato Grosso Antbird, the nasal whinnying and metallic “zee” notes of White-eared Solitaire, and the song of Lesser Seedfinch which constitutes a passable imitation of Willow Warbler!, provide a fascinating listening experience, whilst separation of the very similar and sympatric, Pale-breasted and Cinereous-breasted (*Synallaxis*) spinetails is made easy once the simple disyllabic calls of the former are compared with the accelerating rattles of the latter. Poor recordings are few and far between, with the worst being Giant Conebill and Pale-legged Hornero (calls): the music accompanying the latter is almost acceptable in comparison to the rustling noises which pervade totally the former (the sound quality for that cut is labelled, optimistically, C (on an A–E scale provided for all cuts).

With so many recordings packed on to this CD-ROM, ease of usage is necessarily an important factor to consider in evaluating the format of this software package. In general terms it is very easy to access any species through the family driven menu, and in turn to highlight any of the audio-cuts and thence to start, stop or back-track on individual cuts. Moreover, it is possible when using a Pentium computer to scroll to another selection whilst the current one continues to play unaffected; with a non-Pentium machine, some interference seemed unavoidable. There are, however, some shortcomings: (i) having clicked

upon and "opened-up" a number of families to reveal relevant species sets, there appears to be no way of globally closing these down again, which makes for progressively more inefficient scrolling and retrieval; (the in-built, New Window option does not support a way around this); (ii) background documentation, on-screen and especially accompanying, is lamentable and indeed almost absent, e.g. in respect of the former, two quite different recordings of Plumbeous Pigeon – Andean slope and lowland according to accompanying on-board annotation – are not labelled specifically; (iii) the Search facility was not universally successful: several strings entered (e.g. tapaculos, flamingos) were not recognized; (iv) it proved impossible to print out the Screen Elements component of the Help Panel.

Notwithstanding these few operational shortcomings, the high quality of the vast majority of cuts housed on this CD-ROM, which retails at £79.95 making it excellent value for money, ensures that it is an invaluable aid in preparing oneself for a serious foray to an ornithologically fascinating country which is just "coming of age". Whispers through the audio grapevine indicate that version 2.0 may embrace 800+ species, and therefore will be awaited eagerly, but the lack of an audio-cut bookmark facility in the current version (sorely missed) must be attended to, for its absence in the subsequent version would be a travesty.

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Book notices

Important bird areas in Turkey. G. Magnin and M. Yazar. Istanbul: Doğal Hayati Koruma Derneği, 1997. 331 pp, US\$35.00.

Compiled for the Society for the Protection of Nature in Turkey (DHKD) this book describes 97 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in the country, covering an area of almost 3 million hectares. Some 65% are inland wetlands, including a number of very large salt lakes. However, the largest IBA (no. 60), a high montane biome in the north-east of the country adjacent to the Black Sea, covers 1,200,000 ha and is a bottleneck for raptor migration with very large numbers being reported, especially in autumn.

Each IBA account includes a map (with an inset locating the site within Turkey), a site description, an overview of its importance for particular species and a consideration of conservation issues. While more than half of the sites are fully protected by law, they nevertheless face many problems because of inadequate enforcement. Drainage for agriculture, pollution from sewage and illegal hunting feature in many accounts of wetland IBAs.

It is hoped that the publication of this book will help to raise awareness of the importance of these sites within Turkey. It will also be an invaluable guide to the visiting birder, Turkey having a wealth of birds and landscapes unfamiliar to Europeans. An increase in such ecotourism may, in turn, reinforce the value of these wildlife sites to government officials and politicians. More information on the book can be obtained by e-mailing DHKD. @ sariyer.cc.itu.edu.tr.