

REVIEWS

BOOKS AND REPORTS:

Bub, H and Dorsch, H. 1988. "KENNZEICHEN UND MAUSER .. EUROPÄISCHER SINGVÖGEL, 4. TEIL CISTENSÄNGER, SEIDENSÄNGER, SCHWIRLE, ROHR-SÄNGER". Wittenberg Lutherstadt: Ziemsen Verlag. 221 pp. Numerous black-and-white plates, text figures, tables and line drawings. Soft cover, A5 size.

This is the fourth part of a series covering the identification, diagnostic characters and moult of European passerines. All told, this overwhelmingly detailed publication covers 16 bird species, of which five migrate to, and one occurs in, southern Africa. Of particular interest is the thorough treatment of the *Acrocephalus* warblers; more than 60 % of the book (138 pp.) is dedicated to these warblers. Judging from the efforts put into critical examination of diagnostic and potentially diagnostic features of each species, it appears that European fieldworkers have as great a problem in identification as we do here in southern Africa!

As is to be expected, the European Marsh *A. palustris* and European Reed *A. scirpaceus* warblers cause the greatest identification problems, especially in juvenile birds. 49 tables and text-tables, 33 figures (including nine line-drawings) and six black-and-white plates are presented in the section (D) on 'unmarked reedsingers'. Most of this section deals with *A. palustris* and *A. scirpaceus*.

Regrettably this section is presented in a particularly confusing way. Tables, figures and plates are numbered by section-letter or species-account number, and text-tables lack a numbering system altogether. This would not be a problem if the text had not referred backwards and forwards to tables, figures and even text tables. It would seem more logical to have used a uniform numbering system from the beginning of the book. Another major drawback is the inconsistent use of common and scientific names in text, tables and figures. It would be far clearer to have used either common or scientific names uniformly throughout the text. It is also a pity that the black-and-white plates are not of better quality.

Section D starts off with a summary of primary diagnostic features including plumage colouration, wing characteristics, colour and shape of feet and claws, relative size of body and feet, forehead profile and bill, peculiarities of mandible, tongue and eye, morphometrics and diagnostic key ("Bestimmungshilfe") for broad comparison of *A. palustris* and *A. scirpaceus*. Each species' account includes sections on

species' characters (in the hand; including detailed comparisons with similar species), geographic variation and subspecies, "tail-wing index", wing length, interpretation of wing length, body mass, breeding biology, moult, sex determination, female song, age determination, skull ossification and final remarks. The authors have extensively reviewed and brought together valuable comparative information from the literature, some of which would have been difficult to obtain in southern Africa. In the case of *palustris/scirpaceus* identification, the authors provide a number of new diagnostic methods using complicated morphometric formulae and quotients; these, like the Walinder method in Svensson ('Identification Guide to European Passerines' 1984), may prove useful in final (and desperate!) species identification of a bird in the, by then, sweaty hand.

Although the publication is in German, and not quite as concisely presented as Svensson's Guide, there is such a vast amount of information presented on each of the relevant species, that it should arouse some interest amongst readers of Safring News, but be prepared to spend a lot of time extracting data!

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Mullié, W. C., Khounganian, E. E. & Amer, M. H. 1989. "A PRELIMINARY LIST OF EGYPTIAN BIRD RINGING RECOVERIES 1908-1988". 32 maps, 80 pp., soft cover, A4.

This informative and valuable Report published by the Foundation for Ornithological Research in Egypt (FORE) and the Giza Zoological Gardens, contains details and maps of all 1 358 known ringing recoveries of birds ringed or found in Egypt over a span of 80 years. Some 23 % of the records concern White Storks but there are recoveries of over 90 other species, of which 42 are passerines including Willow Warbler (48 records) and Redbacked Shrike (54 records). Every record is referenced; the list of publications and sources of unpublished information contains 134 citations and will prove an invaluable aid to any researcher wishing to track down obscure ringing reports.

The information contained in the report was used in a summarized format in the recently published book "The Birds of Egypt" (S. M. Goodman & P. L. Meininger (eds), Oxford University Press). The Report can be ordered by transferring 15 Dfl (Dutch Florins), which includes packing and postage, to Bank Account 3350.04.180 Rabobank, Utrecht, The Netherlands (attention FORE, Middelburg). When ordering specify "Egypt Ringing Report"

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