

## NEWS AND REVIEWS

**Phylogeny and classification of birds** by Charles G. Sibley and Jon Ahlquist. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1991. 1008 pp. ISBN 0-300-04085-7. \$100 U.S.

**Distribution and taxonomy of birds of the world** by Charles G. Sibley and Burt L. Monroe, Jr. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1991. 1136 pp. ISBN 0-300-04969-2. \$125 U.S.

The first of these two monographs by Charles G. Sibley and Jon Ahlquist, presents the results of long-term studies of the higher classification of the Class Aves, using the complex technique of DNA-hybridization. The book includes detailed summaries of past classifications. One finds that the Order Falconiformes as such has disappeared; all the diurnal birds of prey now reside in a vastly expanded Order Ciconiiformes where they fall between the auks and the grebes! The New World vultures are placed next to the storks proper. Anatomists have long since told us that the cathartids belong with the storks, but what about all the others? This conglomerate Ciconiiformes contains not only auks, hawks, grebes and storks but also the shorebirds, albatrosses, loons, and even the penguins! If this is indeed a natural clade, its origin, keeping one eye on the fossil record, must have been early in avian history, perhaps the Cretaceous. Subsequent radiation has been so great that probably little if anything is to be learned about falconiforms, with the possible exception of the cathartids, by comparing them with any of their existing "relatives." Whether this new classification is the last word is a moot point; for some criticism see Gill and Sheldon (1991, *Science* 252:1003-1005).

At the family level the treatment is conventional and conservative: with families Accipitridae, Sagittariidae, Falconidae, Cathartidae and subfamily Pandioninae.

In the second monograph Charles Sibley, with the energetic assistance of Burt M. Monroe, Jr., provides a list of the roughly 9000 species of living or recently extinct birds, showing complete ranges and some indication of habitat. Subspecies are not listed. At the genus and species level the treatment is conservative; a bit more so than I would prefer. Borderline taxa are usually given the benefit of the doubt and called species; superspecies are indicated for such allospecies, which is helpful. For example, the Gray Hawk is divided into 2 species, *Asturina plagiata* and *A. nitida*; the American *Elanus* kite, is a full species *E. leucurus* as is the Guadalupe Caracara, *Polyborus lutosus*, etc.

Turning to the owls, the Order Strigiformes has survived, but with the former Caprimulgiformes (e.g., nightjars) brought into it. Nothing drastic there. The barn owls are given family ranking, Tytonidae.

Does the student of raptors need these 2 ponderous, expensive volumes? Various world lists of avian species are now available; though none with ranges in quite so much detail. Treatment of the falconiformes in the revised first volume of "Peters" Check-list of Birds of the World (1979, Cambridge Mus. Comp. Zool.) does include subspecies, but with briefer ranges. Volume 5 in this series 1941, which includes owls, is much out of date and there is no good world list of owls with subspecies. Hawks and Owls of the World by the reviewer, J. Bull, J.T. Marshall and B King, lists species with brief ranges (1988, Western Found. Vert. Zool., Los Angeles).

All of these publications and others that might be mentioned, will differ in the treatment of some taxa. For North America, reference to the 6th edition of the Check-list of North American Birds (Washington: Am. Orn. Union), which now includes the area south through Panama, should invoke little criticism. Meanwhile, the more difficult genera of owls attract attention: C. Koenig (1991, *Eköl. Vögel* 13:15-76) has described 2 new species of pygmy owls (*Glaucidium*) from the Andes, while Joe Marshall and his associates continue to struggle with the puzzling scops and screech owls, *Otus* (*Wilson Bull.* 1991:311-315).—**Dean Amadon**

**4th World Conference on Birds of Prey and Owls.** This conference will be held from 10-17 May 1992 in Berlin. Up to 31 December 1991, the Registration Fee is US\$110.00 (£75.00), and thereafter US\$135.00 (£90.00). For further information, apply to the World Working Group on Birds of Prey (15b Bolton Gardens, London SW5 0AL, Great Britain or Wangenheimstr. 32, 1000 Berlin 33, Germany).

The Scientific Program will comprise the following paper sessions (and conveners): The Systematics and Taxonomy of Raptors: With Emphasis on Contemporary Methodology (C.M. White and A. Kemp), Population Studies: Aspects of Long-term Changes in Numbers and Distribution of Raptors and Owls (A. Kozrzewa and V. Galushin), Declining Raptor Populations: Their Biology and Conservation (B.-U. Meyburg and R.D. Chancellor), Environmental Contaminants and Raptors (R.W. Risebrough), Biology and Conservation of the Large Falcons in the Subgenus *Hierofalco* (T.J. Cade, W. Baumgart and C.M. White), Population Ecology of Owls (E. Korpimäki and H. Pietiäinen), The Biology of Extirpated, Rare or Lesser Known Owls (R.J. Clark and H. Mikkola), Tropical Rain Forests and Raptors

(J.-M. Thiollay), Reintroductions of Eagles, Vultures and Other Raptors (J. Love and M. Terrasse) and Trapping, Marking and Radio-tagging Techniques (R. Bögel and R. Kenward).

Due to the recent fundamental political changes, it is now possible to offer excursions from Berlin to the new federal states of Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (in the former German Democratic Republic or "East Germany") which have hitherto been virtually inaccessible to ornithologists from the West and where there are good chances to observe White-tailed Sea Eagle, Osprey, Lesser Spotted Eagle, Hen Harrier, Montagu's Harrier, Red Kite, Peregrine Falcon, Great Bustard, Black Stork.

## NEWS

### 1991 LESLIE BROWN MEMORIAL GRANT RECIPIENT

**John D. Foss**



Born in Chicago in 1953, John D. Foss grew up in the rural Chain-of-Lakes region of northern Illinois. After high school, the lure of the southwest caused a migration to the Four Corners region where he completed his Bachelor of Science in Geology and Biology (minor) at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado in 1989. John is currently working on a Master of Science degree in raptor biology under the supervision of Tom Cade at Boise State University in Boise, Idaho. His thesis project involves a river survey of habitat use by raptors and other avian species along Chile's Rio Bio-Bio, currently threatened by a series of hydroelectric projects partially funded by the World Bank. Fabian Jakšić, RRF International Director, and Bryan Brown will be assisting John in the field. John's academic and conservation interests include the impact of dams on the physical and biological components of ecosystems.

John is an avid climber, kayaker, skier and mountain biker who has worked as a guide and naturalist in California, Idaho, Prince William Sound, Alaska and the Grand Canyon, Arizona. He has been involved with informal bird surveys at the Chilkat River Bald Eagle Reserve in Haines, Alaska and Tufted Puffin colonies in Kachemak Bay, Alaska. He has also worked as a geologist and hydrologist on watershed rehabilitation projects for the Forest Service and private consultants.

A copy of "**Establishing a Nest Box Program for American Kestrels Along an Interstate Highway: Recommendations Based on the Iowa Program,**" by Daniel E. Varland, Ronald D. Andrews, and Bruce L. Ehresman is available free of charge. This illustrated, 8-page color report sponsored by the Iowa Department of Transportation not only describes how to start an interstate highway nest box program for kestrels but also contains a nest box plan and life history information for the American Kestrel. **Write to: Iowa Department of Transportation, Office of Project Planning, Planning and Research Division, 800 Lincoln Way, Ames, IA 50010.**