

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group

Ostrich
Journal of African Ornithology

ISSN: 0030-6525 (Print) 1727-947X (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tost20

Birds of the Serengeti and Ngorongoro Conservation Area

Jasson RM John

To cite this article: Jasson RM John (2016) Birds of the Serengeti and Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Ostrich, 87:1, 99-100

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.2989/00306525.2015.1129996

Published online: 17 Feb 2016.

Submit your article to this journal

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
http://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=tost20

Download by: [Jasson RM John] **Date:** 18 February 2016, At: 10:09

Ostrich 2016, 87(1): 99–100
Printed in South Africa — All rights reserved

Copyright © NISC (Pty) Ltd
OSTRICH
ISSN 0030–6525 EISSN 1727-947X
http://dx.doi.org/10.2989/00306525.2015.1129996

Book Review

Birds of the Serengeti and Ngorongoro Conservation Area

By Adam Scott Kennedy
2014, Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, NJ 08540, USA
225 pages including over 480 colour photographs, softcover
ISBN 978-0-691-15910-2. Price US$39.00

Downloaded by [Jasson RM John] at 10:09 18 February 2016

Located in northern Tanzania, Serengeti National Park and Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) are popular tourist wildlife destinations in Africa. Both sites are UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage Sites. Serengeti is a natural Heritage Site whereas NCA, located in the south-east of Serengeti, is a mixed type of Heritage Site. Although popular for the high concentration of predators and ungulates, especially the migrating wildebeest, the Serengeti–NCA ecosystem is a birdwatchers' paradise where over 500 bird species have been recorded. The birdlife includes both resident and migratory species, a few of which are near-endemic to the area and some are scarce. Grey-breasted Spurfowl is an endemic of north-central Tanzania, with a stronghold in the central Seronera area of the Serengeti. Lesser and Greater Flamingos are abundant in the NCA crater soda lakes, which are about 100 km from the only East African breeding site at Lake Natron. Among the largest and most common birds in the area are Ostrich, Kori Bustard, Grey Crowned Crane, Saddle-billed Stork and Secretarybird.

Despite the long history of research on the biodiversity of the two sites, particularly Serengeti, this book is the first ornithological photographic guide to be produced. It contains high-quality photographs of the species most likely to be encountered during a visit to the area. It has over 480 dazzling images in 225 pages: some photos include sex and age differences, and seasonal (breeding and non-breeding) plumage variations. Each photo is followed by a short informative account of the ecology, behaviour, biology and key identification features, including vocalisations. A guide is given to when visitors can expect to encounter long-distance and intra-African migrating birds. Size (length from tip of the bill to the end of the tail) of each species is given in both centimetres and inches. Against each species name is a small box for visitors to record the birds they see. The text on biology and origin of their names accompanying some species descriptions is interesting for both tourists and bird guides. This information is rarely included in standard regional guidebooks. These fascinating facts include:

(1) The lack of a syrinx or vocal cord in storks prohibits them from making calls
(2) Turacos get their green colour from turacoverdin pigment and the red colour of their wings from turacin pigments, which are unique to turacos
(3) The name of the Blacksmith Lapwing is derived from its call, which sounds like a hammer striking an anvil '*tink-tink-tink*'
(4) Widowbirds are named after their black 'lady-in-mourning' plumage
(5) Typical roles of the sexes in African Jacana are reversed. It is the males that are smaller in size that build the nests, incubate the eggs and rear the young, quite independently of the female. This behaviour is rare amongst birds.
(6) Lovebirds acquired their romantic name from their habits of mutual preening and monogamous pairing, and it is not unusual to see them interlocking bills as though they were kissing.

The book also puts ornithological techno-jargon, such as kleptoparasitism in Grey-headed Gull, filter-feeding in flamingos, brood parasitism in honeyguides, cuckoos, whydahs and indigobirds, and zygodactyly in parrots, cuckoos and woodpeckers, in simple layman's language with examples.

The author used English names instead of the standard scientific names to make it easier for birdwatchers and inexperienced bird guides. Moreover, scientific names of all birds mentioned in the text are presented in the appendices. Unfortunately, a complete checklist for the area is not included in the appendix. The author used a habitat-based approach instead of standard systematic ordering used in most field guides. For this reason, users have to read a section on how to use this book before getting into the park. Birdlife is grouped into birds of the plains, marsh and water, acacia scrub, village, forest, air, nightbirds, Lake Victoria specials, woodland, scrub and gardens. Although this is user-friendly for inexperienced birders, it can be challenging for seasoned ornithologists who are used to the standard checklists that start with ostriches and end with buntings. Another challenge with this approach is that birds are very mobile and can move between or among habitats. Finally, putting clear boundaries on habitats for first-time visitors and novice bird guides can be misleading. Nevertheless, the habitat-based approach is important for tourists who would like to combine birdwatching and game viewing – they suggest areas with maximum satisfaction for both, without demanding too much from the guides.

The book is well written for its target audience. It represents an interesting departure from traditional field

bird guides, and the only major oversight is on the short index (last inside cover page) caption. Instead of group names of birds, the caption reads as 'Group names of the mammals and reptiles included in this book are listed here for quick reference'. The book is about birds not mammals and reptiles. Nonetheless, it is an excellent book that I recommend highly for tourists visiting northern Tanzanian wildlife areas, bird guides, students on training or internships, park managers and bird lovers. The distribution of this guide book will stimulate or add value to avitourism in northern Tanzanian wildlife areas, and similar publications should be produced for other birdwatching hotspots using this book as a benchmark.

Jasson RM John
Department of Zoology and Wildlife Conservation, College of Natural and Applied Sciences, University of Dar es Salaam, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Email: wildornithology@udsm.ac.tz

Downloaded by [Jasson RM John] at 10:09 18 February 2016