African Journal of Ecology

Book Review

Checklist of Tanzanian Species, Version 1

Hulda Gideon, Philibert Nyinondi and Godfrey Oyema (eds), InterPress of Tanzania Ltd, Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology, Dar es Salaam (2012), 545 pp. ISBN: 978-9987-9485-1-2

Tanzania is among the top biodiversity-rich countries in Africa and a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Yet until recently, there has not been any comprehensive documentation of the species of Tanzania. Before the production of the 'Checklist of Tanzanian Species' by Gideon, Nyinondi and Oyema (2012), information was scattered in published and unpublished works, Web journals, and in the depositories of academic and research institution's libraries, herbaria and museums where it was difficult to access. This book is an important contribution to the documentation of Tanzanian biodiversity.

Species accounts in this book are arranged by taxon (species totals in brackets); marine algae (556), amphibians (197), terrestrial arthropods (867), birds (1148), cnidarians (365), echinoderms (144), fishes (1568), fungi (810), mammals (333), water molluscs (159), plants (7714 verified, 953 unresolved names), poriferans (120) and reptiles (355), with individual chapters co-authored by experts from universities, research institutions and knowledgeable practitioners.

Although most chapters are well written, some authors did not cross-check the species checklists with international databases, and hence, there are important omissions. Furthermore, the written accounts for several taxa also do not relate closely to species checklist. For example, in the chapter on mammals, the authors discuss the edibility of species and whether a species is pest, but this is not indicated in the species checklist. Similarly, in the mammal and reptile chapters, the proportion of endemic and threatened species are cited, but no attempt is made to identify the threatened or endemic status of individual species. In the mammal chapter, *Equus burchelii* is placed in the family Rhinocerotidae instead of its own family, Equidae, whereas in the chapter on birds, species with unresolved taxonomic identification were included (e.g. Rubeho Forest Partridge *Xenoperdix sp. nov.*, White-tailed Cisticola *Cisticola sp. nov.* and Kilombero Cisticola *Cisticola sp. nov.*), but unverified species are only acceptable if it is followed by some form of justification as presented by the authors of the plant chapter. On the other hand, the chapter on birds includes the Swahili name for species, which is notable because Swahili is the national language of Tanzania, and it permits the public to more readily use the species checklists.

Man and domesticated species have not been included in the species checklist which is another shortcoming. If the checklist is for wild species only, it would have been good for the title of the book to read as 'Preliminary Checklist of Tanzanian Wild Species'. Lastly, considerable inconsistency exists among chapters in terms species taxonomy. For example, in the chapters on plants, fungi and birds family, genus, species and species authority are presented, but this same level of detail is missing for the other major taxon.

In conclusion, the book is a valuable contribution to detailing the status of biodiversity in Tanzania, but could have benefitted from more careful editing. In spite of the minor shortcomings, I congratulate the authors of different chapters and the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology for this valuable summary and would highly recommend this book to scientists, students, policymakers and the general public.

Jasson R.M. John
E-mails: wildornithology@udsm.ac.tz, tanzania.korea@gmail.com

doi: 10.1111/aje.12249

© 2015 John Wiley & Sons Ltd,