

*Birds to Watch 2. The World List of Threatened Birds*, by N.J. Collar, M.J. Crosby and A.J. Stattersfield 1994. Birdlife International, Cambridge. ISBN 0-946888-30-2. £18.50 (paperback)

Birdlife International, founded in 1922 under the original name, International Council for Bird Preservation, published the latest *Birds to Watch 2, The World List of Threatened Birds*, a replacement of *Birds to Watch*, published in 1988. The authors admit that this new work has the character of a second edition; nevertheless, it represents an entirely new evaluation of the world's threatened species, using new criteria, a more standardized presentation of the texts, and some overview of the data.

The authors use definitions to distinguish the various status of the species; with the main ones listed here to illustrate the depth of the study:

*Extinct*: when there is no reasonable doubt that the last individual has died since 1988, the cut-off date used.

*Extinct in the Wild*: when it is known only to survive in cultivation, in captivity, or as a naturalized population well outside the past range.

*Critically Endangered*: when it is facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future.

*Endangered*: when it is not Critical but is facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future.

*Vulnerable*: when it is not Critical or Endangered but is facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future.

*Conservation Dependent*: To be considered Conservation Dependent, a species must be the focus of a continuing taxon-specific conservation programme which directly affects the taxon in question. Other classes are: Low Risk, Data Deficient and Not Evaluated.

The book is divided into Introduction and Species Accounts, the main contribution in the form of Globally Threatened Species. It uses three appendices, one of which is the species listed by geopolitical unit, 100 pages of all the above definitions by family per country. It clearly set out its objectives: warning us of the threats to birds all over the world. It is not just birds, their range, numbers, and habitats; their conservation requirements and the threats are well documented. It might help to make more people aware of the importance of the conservation of these species. A good example is South America. Brazil alone is known to have 15 critically endangered species, with 1 extinct since 1988, 31 endangered and 56 vulnerable. New Zealand is not scoring very well, either, with one extinct, 9 endangered and 32 vulnerable species.

This sort of publication is not a nice coffee table book with pretty pictures. It is compelling reading though, once one has handled the introduction. This reviewer is aware that no individual researcher will be able to come up with such a complete list of threatened bird species (hence the 30 pages of references included; more than 12 people were consulted for New Zealand alone). This is a must for anybody even remotely interested in conservation issues but I have to warn you, it is depressing reading.

Peter Schweigman