Reviews

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The following critiques express the opinions of the individual evaluators regarding the strengths, weaknesses, and value of the books they review. As such, the appraisals are subjective assessments and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors or any official policy of the American Ornithologists’ Union.

Erwin Stresemann (1889–1972).—Leben und Werk eines Pioniers der wissenschaftlichen Ornithologie—Jürgen Haffer, Erich Rutschke and Klaus Wunderlich. 2000. Acta Historica Leopoldina, Number 34. Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina e.V., Postfach 110543, D 06019 Halle (Salle), Germany. 465 pp., 74 illustrations. ISBN 3-8304-5091-5. Paper, 68 DM. (Note: This book can be obtained online through Barnes & Noble, [www.bn.com], and then scrolling down the left margin to click on their European partner, [bol.com], click on Germany and finally entering the ISBN number and search.) Erwin Stresemann was clearly the most influential ornithologist of the twentieth century, being primarily responsible for the rise of the New Avian Biology beginning in the 1920s. The first International Ornithological Congress (Vienna, 1884) convened just five years before his birth on 22 November 1889. And, having died two days before his 83rd birthday on 20 November 1972, just two years after the 14th Congress, Stresemann is a distant historical figure. Most present-day ornithologists are largely unaware of his significant contributions to ornithology over three-quarters of a century ago, before most of us were born. Only three of his pre-World War II students (Wilhelm Meise, Ernst Mayr, and Joachim Steinbacher) are still alive. Even the number of ornithologists who actually met Stresemann is decreasing rapidly. His last visit to North America was in 1962 and his last International Ornithological Congress was in 1966 (Oxford). When Stresemann first began his studies, ornithological research (mainly systematic and faunistics) was drastically different from the diversity of avian biological work done during the past half century. That change in the direction of ornithological research was the direct consequence of ideas developed by the young Stresemann during his student days in the 1910s and incorporated into his major work—the Aves volume of the Handbuch der Zoologie.

The publication of that excellent book provides a detailed history on the life and scientific work of Erwin Stresemann and enables avian biologists and science historians to learn just about everything about this remarkable ornithologist. Haffer, Rutschke, and Wunderlich provide a detailed history of Stresemann’s life and career in three chapters: his personal life (K. Wunderlich), his personality and its influences (E. Rutschke), and his scientific work (J. Haffer). Haffer has added a detailed 29-page summary in English to a series of appendices. Because of the untimely deaths of Klaus Wunderlich (18 April 1997) and Erich Rutschke (12 February 1999), Jürgen Haffer had the responsibility of seeing the manuscript through the publication process.

This work is well illustrated with photographs and line drawings, all of which have an English as well as German legend. An appendix with 14 separate parts includes many details such as a list of avian taxa described by Stresemann (pp. 375–385); taxa named in Stresemann’s honor (pp. 387–390); references to published biographies of Stresemann (p. 391); honors (pp. 393–394); festschrifts, obituaries, and appreciations (pp. 395–397); a time table of his life (pp. 441–442); several unpublished manuscripts; and the excellent 29-page English summary by Haffer. A list of illustrations and several indices are provided. Very useful are the birth and death dates given for many workers in the Index of Persons (however, my birth date is given as 1939 rather than the correct 1933).

This book is an excellent and thorough treatment of the scientific career of this most important ornithologist of the twentieth century. In the two decades before World War II, Stresemann was at the center of international ornithology with close connections to all of the world’s important ornithologists. During that time, he revitalized the systematic work in the Berlin Museum; wrote the Aves volume of the Handbuch der Zoologie; directed the work of a remarkable group of graduate students in ornithology; was, for 50 years, the central figure in the Deutschen Ornithologen-Gesellschaft; and, most importantly, was the catalyst in the development of the New Avian Bi-

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