

CLUB ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Bulletin of the BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

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The 1007th meeting of the Club was held on Monday 27 March in the upstairs room at the Barley Mow, 104 Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 2EE. The meeting was recorded and a video of the event is available online (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OtmwFkt-FZI>) and also via the Club website <https://boc-online.org/>. Nineteen people were present: Ms A. Belman, Mr P. J. Belman, Miss H. Baker, Mr S. Chapman, Ms C. Derrick, Mr M. Howard, Mr A. Jackson, Ms van Keulen, Ms S. Nichols, Dr R. Prÿs-Jones (*Speaker*), Mr N. Redman, Dr A. Richford, Dr D. G. D. Russell, Dr M. Stervander, Mr S. A. H. Statham, Mr C. W. R. Storey (*Chairman*), Ms J. White, Mr G. de Silva Wijeyeratne and Mr J. Woodman.

Dr Robert Prÿs-Jones, Bird Group, Natural History Museum at Tring, spoke on *Wallace's Sarawak bird collections and the development of his ornithological knowledge*. The integration of information from the diaries/notebooks of important 19th-century ornithologists with that from their specimens and accompanying labels can provide intriguing insight into the development of their interest in, and knowledge of, avifaunas. Two key examples, involving major collections now largely held by the Natural History Museum at Tring, comprise Allan Octavian Hume (see Prÿs-Jones 2022, *Arch. Nat. Hist.* 49: 391–407) and Alfred Russel Wallace, the subject of this talk. Although already a highly experienced collector of South American fauna, Wallace had no first-hand knowledge of the South-East Asian fauna when he arrived there for an eight-year visit in 1854. From early November 1854 to January 1856, he was based in Sarawak, and the talk integrated information from his specimen labels with that found in his field notebook listing of 'Birds collected in Borneo', with the aim of unravelling how his skill in identifying the birds he collected there increased over time.

Keep an eye on the BOC website (<https://boc-online.org/meetings/upcoming-meeting>) and the BOC Twitter account (@online_BOC) for news of upcoming meetings.

BOOK REVIEWS

Louette, M. 2023. *The bird species from the type collection*. Collections of the RMCA. Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren. 179 pp, many colour photos and illustrations. €25.

The Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) was founded in 1897 and currently houses approximately 150,000 bird specimens from throughout Africa but with a special focus on the central portion of the continent. This is the third review of the avian type specimens held in the RMCA, following previous inventories by Louette and co-workers published in 2002 and 2010. However, the latest work is decidedly different to those prior compendia, being considerably more attractive and therefore saleable, with more discursive and general texts aimed to some extent at the interested amateur, rather than solely at museum specialists; however, it is also less complete in its coverage.

The volume under discussion comprises four sections. The first provides background information about the museum, some of the 'personalities' who contributed specimens, notes on terminology, and the like. The bulk of the book is formed by the accounts for each of the taxa ($n = 25$) accepted as species by the so-called IOC world bird list (www.worldbirdnames.org) for which some or all of the type material is held in RMCA. Each account lists the current name, original combination, and the type material held in Tervuren, together with sections on etymology, remarks on the species' biology and conservation, distribution (including a map) and taxonomic history; an individual set of references is presented for each species. Field photographs, or specially prepared artwork in the case of almost unknown birds such as Itombwe Nightjar *Caprimulgus prigoginei*, illustrate all of the 25 accounts. The same format is employed for the final two, much shorter, sections, which cover (1) six taxa that Louette considers strong candidates for species status in the near future, and in contrast (2) three birds, originally described as species, but which the author treats as 'melanistic morphs'.



As Louette notes in the prefatory material, RMCA has at least 988 bird type specimens of 227 nominal taxa, and while these were all listed in Louette *et al.* (2010) only a subset is included herein. Nevertheless, a table does list all of the subspecies accepted by the IOC world bird list for which RMCA has type material.

The book can be ordered online by e-mail (publications@africamuseum.be) or via <https://www.africamuseum.be/en/research/publications>; in the UK it is available from the Natural History Book Service (<https://www.nhbs.com/the-bird-species-from-the-type-collection-book>).

Guy M. Kirwan

Reference:

Louette, M., Meirte, D., Louage, A. & Reygel, A. 2010. *Type specimens of birds in the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren*. Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren.

Raffaele, H. A., Wiley, J. W., Garrido, O. H., Keith, A. R. & Raffaele, J. I. 2020. *Birds of the West Indies*. Second edn. Helm, London. 288 pp, 129 colour plates. £22.50.

Raffaele, H. A., Petrovic, C., Colón López, S. A., Yntema, L. D. & Salguero Faria, J. A. 2021. *Birds of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands*. Third edn. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. 224 pp, several colour photos and 87 colour plates. £20.

Latta, S., Rimmer, C. & McFarland, K. 2022. *Field guide to the birds of the Dominican Republic & Haiti*. Second edn. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. 228 pp, several colour photos and many colour plates. £20.

Adding to the explosion of recent works on the West Indies, among them two BOC checklists (Kirkconnell *et al.* 2020, Wiley 2021) and a new field guide (Kirwan *et al.* 2019) rooted in HBW/BirdLife taxonomy (del Hoyo 2014, 2016), these three works are all new editions of works first published in 1998, 1983, and 2006, respectively. All possess a similar feel, an impression heightened by the fact that the first two share much of the same artwork, whereas the Hispaniola guide is augmented with a large number of new illustrations painted by Dana Gardner. The Puerto Rico and general West Indies guides further differ in 'prioritising' the regularly occurring species, with vagrants 'demoted' to a section of plates at the end, and the second-named volume even omits some of the exceptionally rare visitors that have been recorded. All three fit easily in a larger jacket pocket or small day-bag, which in the case of the West Indies and Hispaniola volumes represents a marked difference (many would argue improvement) on their first editions, but obviously comes at a price in terms of what is included and what is not. While it will be tempting for many to plump for the one-stop shop of a guide to the entire region, observant users will discover that there are subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) differences in the mapped distributions for Hispaniola between the Latta *et al.* island-specific volume and those in Raffaele *et al.*; for my money, those in the former appear more likely to be accurate. The Puerto Rico volume, however, contains no species distribution maps, which feels like a failing, despite the small size of Puerto Rico, never mind the various Virgin Islands, but both it and the Hispaniola tome do contain useful bird-finding sections (an omission from the whole-region guide). Both visiting and resident birdwatchers in the West Indies have never been better served. Even James Bond might be staggered as to what he started!

Guy M. Kirwan

References:

del Hoyo, J. & Collar, N. 2014. *The HBW and BirdLife International illustrated checklist of the birds of the world*, vol. 1. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.

del Hoyo, J. & Collar, N. 2016. *The HBW and BirdLife International illustrated checklist of the birds of the world*, vol. 2. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.

Kirkconnell, A., Kirwan, G. M., Garrido, O. H., Mitchell, A. & Wiley, J. W. 2020. *The birds of Cuba: an annotated checklist*. BOC Checklist no. 26. British Ornithologists' Club, Tring.

Kirwan, G. M., Levesque, A., Oberle, M. & Sharpe, C. J. 2019. *Birds of the West Indies*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona.

Wiley, J. W. 2021. *The birds of St Vincent, the Grenadines and Grenada: an annotated checklist*. BOC Checklist no. 27. British Ornithologists' Club, Tring.

Friends of the BOC

The BOC has from 2017 become an online organisation without a paying membership, but instead one that aspires to a supportive network of Friends who share its vision of ornithology—see: <http://boc-online.org/>. Anyone wishing to become a Friend of the BOC and support its development should pay UK£25.00 by standing order or online payment to the BOC bank account:

Barclays Bank, 16 High Street, Holt, NR25 6BQ, Norfolk
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Friends receive regular updates about Club events and are also eligible for discounts on the Club's Occasional Publications. It would assist our Treasurer, Richard Malin (e-mail: rmalin21@gmail.com), if you would kindly inform him if you intend becoming a Friend of the BOC.

The *Bulletin* and other BOC publications

Since volume 137 (2017), the *Bulletin* of the BOC has been an online journal, published quarterly, that is available to all readers without charge. Furthermore, it does not levy any publication charges (including for colour plates) on authors of papers and has a median publication time from receipt to publication of five to six months. Prospective authors are invited to contact the *Bulletin* editor, Guy Kirwan (GMKirwan@aol.com), to discuss future submissions or look at <http://boc-online.org/bulletin/bulletin-contributions>. Back numbers up to volume 136 (2016) are available via the Biodiversity Heritage Library website: www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/46639#/summary; vols. 132–136 are also available on the BOC website: <http://boc-online.org/>

BOC Occasional Publications are available from the BOC Office or online at info@boc-online.org. Future BOC-published checklists will be available from NHBS and as advised on the BOC website. As its online repository, the BOC uses the British Library Online Archive (in accordance with IZCN 1999, Art. 8.5.3.1).

