A Sound Guide to Nightjars & Related Nightbirds

By Richard Ranft & Nigel Cleere.

This superb CD must be essential field equipment for anyone interested in nightjars and their allies. Covering 107 species, only 12 short of the World total, this fascinating compilation ranges from the clicks of echo-locating Oilbirds Steatornis caripensis to the piercing shriek of Abyssinian Nightjar Caprimulgus poliocephalus. Tracks are generally of such high quality that the guide is an entertainment as much as a tool. It will be particularly valuable in the African, Southeast Asian and South American tropics. It will encourage many (including me!), previously daunted by the inadequacy of pictures and words, to put more effort into finding nightjars, leading to a better understanding of this under-recorded group. Congratulations to Richard Ranft and Nigel Cleere on putting together this guide, and also especially to the intrepid sound-recordists everywhere from the Bornean mountains to the Congolese rain forests.

RODERICK LESLIE

Belize and Northern Guatemala: The Ecotravellers’ Wildlife Guide

By Les Beletsky.
488 pages; 104 colour plates and numerous colour photographs and line-drawings.

At last, a single book which helps the visitor to identify all the larger-than-an-insect forms of life likely to be seen – 350 of the most common amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals and fish – plus well-written information on distribution, ecology, behaviour, habitats, conservation and ecotourism ethics, with helpful travel notes. The 200 birds are well depicted, despite disturbing differences of scale. Other plates range from familiar mammals, such as Agouti, Paca, Margay, Tayra and Grison, to the less familiar Mexican Caecilian, Mussurance, Tamandua, Cacomistle, Margate, Graysby, Encrusting Gorgonian, Bulb Tunicate, and even the aptly-named Donkey Dung Sea Cucumber. If you are intrigued, buy the book. A splendid all-round natural-history primer and travel guide.

BRYAN BLAND

Das Sichelhuhn

By Franz Haufner & Alexander V. Andreev.
St Petersburg, 1998. 118 pages,
109 colour plates. ISBN 3-85328-014-5.
Paperback. No price given. (In German, chapter summaries and captions to plates in English.)

A vivid account of a two-year study of the Siberian Grouse Falcipennis falcipennis in the
vast conifer forests of eastern Russia. The species is one of the least studied in the Palearctic, perhaps because of the unwelcoming nature of its habitat. This book conveys some of the pioneering spirit of fieldwork, with wonderful photographs of lekking birds and valuable information on the biology and ecology of the grouse, tracking the seasonal changes in diet and use of habitat. It provides an important baseline for a species with a limited global range, which could easily be threatened by wide-scale development of commercial logging.

JULIAN HUGHES
Most travellers to Belize and Guatemala want to experience lush tropical forests and catch glimpses of exotic wildlife. This guide provides all the information you need to find, identify, and learn about the region's magnificent animal life. Beletsky selected approximately 500 of the animals you are most likely to see, including fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. Also pictured are some of the highly endangered species of the area. You will want to have this easy-to-carry, entertaining, and beautifully illustrated book as a constant companion on your journey.