

News and Notes

This section, 'News and Notes' is intended to provide a forum for up-to-date information on threatened species, on-going conservation work and other issues related to bird conservation. It includes pieces abstracted from other publications. Please send any contributions to BCI News and Notes Editor, BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, or email them to robsrw@interactive.net.ec

Spanish Imperial Eagle *Aquila adalberti* declining

A rapid decline in the population of the critically threatened Spanish Imperial Eagle *Aquila adalberti* has come to light. In the last four years, the population has declined by 30 pairs to 120 pairs and it is considered possible that if unchecked this decline could lead to the species' extinction within the next decade. In the species' main stronghold, Doñana National Park, there has been a decline from 15 pairs in the early 1980s to just nine in 1998. Breeding success has also been found to be very low with just five chicks hatching and only two fledging in the park in 1998; one of these was later recovered dead, having been poisoned in the nearby Province of Cadiz. Poisoning remains the greatest threat with 78% of all known Spanish Imperial Eagle deaths being attributable to poisoning since 1993.

La Garcilla (1999) 103.

Biologica (1999) 32.

Birding World (1999) 12 (6): 257.

Progress in the conservation of the White-winged Guan *Penelope albipennis* in north-west Peru

The Asociación Cracidae Perú and the Bárbara D'Achille Captive Breeding Centre are developing an intensive program for the conservation of the critically threatened White-winged Guan *Penelope albipennis* in north-western Peru. The species is endemic to the Tumbesian Endemic Bird Area and survives in small numbers in remnants of dry forest in remote valleys. The breeding centre has

a captive population of 90 White-winged Guans, along with other species of cracids. Agreements with other conservation organisations and universities have been signed to undertake studies of the bird in captivity and of the species' status in the wild. A pilot reintroduction project of the White-winged Guan is planned and the agreement of the rural community has led to the establishment of a Private Ecological Reserve on their lands. Currently a road to access the remote part of the reserve which will serve as the site for the first reintroduction is being constructed. A training course for the voluntary park guards of the community has been held with the help of Pro-Aves Peru and funding from the Neotropical Bird Club. Construction of the flight aviaries for the reintroduction will start shortly; the guans will be held for six months before their release into the wild. The whole project is possible thanks to the funding of Fundación Backus Pro-Fauna en vías de Extinción.

Lucila Pautrat

Project Manager, Asociación Cracidae Perú,
Torres Paz 708, Chiclayo

Tel. (51-074) 22-4952.

Email: cracidae@llampayec.rcp.net.pe

Spix's Macaw *Cyanopsitta spixii* recovery program progress

The hybrid pair of the male Spix's Macaw *Cyanopsitta spixii* and female Blue-winged Macaw *Ara macarana* have successfully raised their first young Blue-winged Macaws. In three previous breeding attempts the hybrid eggs have been replaced with eggs of Blue-winged Macaws of equal age, but have failed to

hatch. This year the eggs were replaced with wooden eggs and at the time of hatching these were replaced with three day old Blue-winged Macaws from another nest. Both young fledged successfully and continue to be fed by both of the hybrid pair. This success gives hope to the possibility of replacement with Spix's Macaw chicks in future breeding attempts.

Additionally, an experimental release of nine captive bred Blue-winged Macaws has been undertaken. The birds were released after a year and a half in the pre-release aviary and when a suitable design of radio transmitter had been developed. The initial radio-collars appeared to alter the behaviour of the birds and were destroyed by the birds. A transmitter mounted under the tail was therefore tested on captive birds at Loro Parque and was considered a success. The permanent Committee for the Recovery of the Spix's Macaw then approved the trial release. Within a month of the release one bird had disappeared without trace and another had been predated. The remaining seven have gradually moved away from the release area making increasingly longer forays and have begun feeding on natural food items more frequently.

Cyanopsitta 52: 8–9

New Brush-Finch *Atlapetes* from Peru

The latest issue of *Ibis* describes a new species: Black-spectacled Brush-Finch *Atlapetes melanops* from central Peru. The species inhabits dry scrub in a zone of high rainfall on both sides of the Mantaro River. It has a restricted range and although it is still little known, it probably should be considered Vulnerable or Conservation Dependent.

Valqui, T. and Ejeldså, J. (1999) New Brush-Finch *Atlapetes* from Peru. *Ibis* 141: 194–198.

Golden-plumed Parakeet *Leptosittaca branickii* nests found

Eight active nests of the Golden-plumed Parakeet *Leptosittaca branickii* are described. All nests were in dead Wax Palms *Ceroxylon quindiuense*. Three of the nests were found in the Cordillera de Sabanilla in Zamora-Chinchipec in southern Ecuador in January and February 1998. The other five were found in the central Andes of Colombia in June 1998. The seasonal variation in breeding timing is suggested to be related to food supply.

Molina, F. S. and López-Lanus, B. (1999) First nesting records of the Golden-plumed Conure *Leptosittaca branickii*. *Papageienkunde* 3: 51–52.

BOOK NOTICES

A field guide to the raptors of Europe, The Middle East, and North Africa.

Clark, W.S. (1999) Oxford: Oxford University Press. 371 pages, £25.

Any conservation strategy for birds requires a sound knowledge of distribution, which in turn necessitates accurate identification. Raptors are notoriously prone to misidentification, even in this well watched region. The book comes hard on the heels of D. Forsman's *The raptors of Europe and the Middle East*, published by T & A.D. Poyser earlier this year. Forsman's book uses a large number of photographs to emphasize identification points, whereas Clark has 48 colour plates by the artist N.J. Schmitt, photographs being relegated to an appendix. The colour plates are of high quality, all plumages being illustrated adjacent to confusion species. Thus the Black Kite *Milvus migrans* has a plate to itself, with 13 drawings, but also is shown on the Red Kite *M. milvus* plate. The Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* is illustrated over three plates and the buzzards *Buteo* spp. over four. There are clear descriptions of key identification points opposite the plates,

though I feel that discrete pointers to key identification features on the plates themselves would have improved them further. Confusion species are listed at the bottom of each species text. The main body of the text gives detailed species descriptions of the various plumages, including morphs, a description of similar species, with notes on flight, moult, and behaviour. There is also a section on status and distribution which includes clear maps of breeding, migration and winter distribution. There is no mention of call-notes, which, with practice, for some species can be diagnostic. The book is an extremely handy size for fieldwork. Raptor enthusiasts will want both Clark's and Forsman's books. Those less committed will need to decide on the basis of the illustrations, and whether they prefer photographs or drawings as their main medium of identification.

Chris Mason

Island Eagles. Crane, K. and Nellist, K. (1999) Cartwheeling Press, Downbye Cottage, Glenbrittle, Isle of Skye, IV47 8TA, U.K. 142 pp, £10. including P&P.

The Golden Eagles of Skye face increasing pressures as more and more people choose to visit and walk in the hills of the glorious west coast of Scotland. This book is a very personal account of eagle life, a tale only possible because passion, perseverance and powers of observation brought the authors closer to the birds than most of us are to each other. We can be voyeurs but not intrusive. Courtship, hunting, territoriality are all discussed but it is the skirmishes with foxes, the eaglets jumping joyously in their first snow, the sad decline of an old male, the fate of a youngster born with a crossed bill, the intimate stories, that make this book. Read it.

Sheila Mason