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## Book reviews

**Birds of the Horn of Africa: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and Socotra.** Nigel Redman, Terry Stevenson and John Fanshawe with contributions from Nik Borrow and Brian Finch. Illustrated by John Gale and Brian Small. 2009. Christopher Helm. 496 pages. Paperback. ISBN 9780713665413.

This is an outstanding guide to one of the few remaining areas on the continent without full coverage in a contemporary field guide. Many of the illustrations will be familiar to users of Stevenson and Fanshawe's East African guide, but they seem to be reproduced more attractively here. There are plenty of new illustrations and some of the groups have been entirely redone regardless of overlap, so that only two illustrators are used throughout the book. So there are new, and very good, plates of cisticolas and flycatchers, for example. The maps contain a great deal of detail, presumably benefiting from the recent publication of the Ethiopian atlas (see below). There is no serious competition for this book for the countries it covers, but I suspect it will become invaluable for many strictly East African birders too, given the high degree of overlap, the improved illustrations and the coverage of some potential vagrants to the south.

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**Birds of Ethiopia and Eritrea: an atlas of distribution.** John Ash and John Atkins. With contributions from Caroline Ash, Sue Edward, Chris Hillman, Geoffrey Last and John Miskell. Photographs by Hadoram Shirihai. 2009. Christopher Helm. 463 pages. Hardback. £45.00. ISBN 9781408109793.

This is a first class atlas covering a key area of avian endemism on the continent. Each species is mapped on a quarter degree grid with distinction made for breeding records and approximate boundaries showing subspecific limits where applicable. The dataset of over 100,000 records draws on historic information from specimen collections, published literature and more recent observations - 70% the authors' own. A map in the introductions shows the very high percentage of tetrads visited by the authors themselves (70%) and the extremely small number with no records at all (28 out of 479) - mostly in border areas or offshore islands. The accompanying text gives details on status within the two countries, preferred habitats, breeding seasons, favoured sites

(with tetrad indicated) and the number of tetrads occupied. Where there have been historic changes in distribution, these are noted in the text. There are informative introductory chapters on biogeography and the history of ornithology in the countries, breeding seasons, migration and conservation. There are also numerous appendices listing unsubstantiated records (with details), Important Bird Areas, a record of ringing activity in the countries (including species totals and details of recoveries) and a lengthy gazetteer and bibliography. For anyone unfamiliar with the birds of these two countries, the set of excellent colour photographs in the introduction depicting 29 of the 32 endemics will act as a great enticement to visit.

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## Letter to the Editor

### On the reported presence of Leaflove *Phyllastrephus scandens* in Ruaha National Park, Tanzania

Among the notable bird records from Ruaha National Park, Tanzania, Glen *et al.* (2005) include Leaflove *Phyllastrephus scandens* but do not give any details of the features by which the identity of the bird was determined. This appears to represent the first record of this bulbul species away from the extreme western fringe of the country: Britton (1980) reports a number of specimen records from this area, the closest to Ruaha being Mahari Mountain (6°12'S 29°50'E), some 470 km WNW of the localities mentioned by Glen *et al.* Indeed, its presence in Ruaha would represent a significant eastward range extension for a species which is otherwise largely confined to the forests of the Guineo-Congolian region of central and western Africa, notwithstanding its presence in some forest outliers of central Uganda and restricted parts of the eastern edge of the Albertine Rift, with Mahari Mountain on the south-eastern extremity of its range (Keith *et al.* 1992, Fishpool & Tobias 2005).

These observations are, however, not only somewhat surprising on distributional grounds. Glen *et al.* (2005) state that the record of the bird mist-netted in November 2002 was from an altitude of 1,812 m, while subsequent sight record(s)—number not specified—in September 2004 were made at 1,730 m. Elsewhere in its extensive range, the species is exceptional above 1,200 m and unknown above 1,500m (Keith *et al.* 1992, Fishpool & Tobias 2005). Furthermore, Leaflove differs from most other members of the genus *Phyllastrephus* (notwithstanding that it is sometimes separated into the genus *Pyrrhurus*) in being extremely conspicuous vocally, with a loud, highly