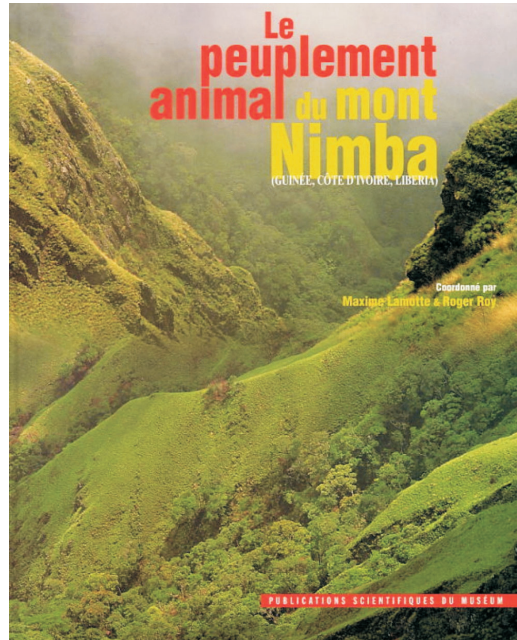

Book review

***Le peuplement animal du Mont Nimba (Guinée, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia)* edited by M. Lamotte & R. Roy. Mémoires du Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle 190. 2003. Pp. 724. Price: €137 (hardback). Publications scientifiques du Muséum, Paris. ISBN 2 85653 554 2**

Mount Nimba, straddling the borders of three countries, is one of only three peaks (the other two are in Sierra Leone) above 1500 m in tropical West Africa to the west of Mount Cameroon. Thus it has many faunal elements distinct from the adjacent lowland areas. Despite a long history of biological research and the declaration of a Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage Site in 1981, uncontrolled hunting, and open-cast iron ore mining on the Liberian side, has had devastating effects on the environment.

This publication, in hard-bound book form, documents studies by the Natural History Museum in Paris on the Guinean sector of the massif, and reviews some of the earlier work. Apart from the bilingual introduction, the other 14 chapters are in French, with English abstracts and both English and French captions to the tables and figures. The chapters are referenced separately, while there is a systematic index to the whole volume.

Following a brief account of scientific research at Mount Nimba from 1942–1978, and a chapter on the main biotic regions of the massif, there is an overview of the fauna of the high-altitude grasslands. This chapter focuses primarily on the invertebrates, but also highlights the endemic live-bearing bufonid *Nectophrynooides occidentalis*. A chapter on the *Ficus* species of the Guinean part of the mountain follows, with a discussion and taxonomic description of their associated fig wasps, drosophilid flies and weevils. Several new taxa are described. Eight chapters of systematic accounts, with some information on biology and zonation on the mountain, cover the following animal groups: terrestrial and freshwater molluscs, decapod crustaceans, dragonflies (Odonata), grasshoppers (Eumastacoidea, Acridoidea), click beetles (Elateridae), scarab beetles (Scarabaeidae *sensu*



stricto, Aphodiidae, Ceratocanthidae), freshwater fish and reptiles. For the birds, there is a discussion of the avifauna in terms of habitat, trophic structure, and social organisation, and an updated checklist. The volume concludes with a short chapter on bats; 39 species have been collected on Mount Nimba, including three tenants of old mine galleries whose closest known populations are on Mount Cameroon.

This volume is very well produced and illustrated. It is a valuable contribution to faunistic studies in West Africa, but will be of primary interest to specialists in the groups treated in detail as listed above. You will need to read the French text, as the English abstracts are for the most part very brief, and the translations are often awkward. As the editors note in their introduction, the full story of Mount Nimba has yet to be told – this is just an apéritif.

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