

DISEASES AND MEDICAL MANAGEMENT OF HOUBARA BUSTARDS AND OTHER OTIDIDAE

Tom Bailey
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It is de *rigueur* when reviewing textbooks to criticise. After all, in the majority of reviews, it is the reviewers duty to tell prospective readers why they should buy that particular book over its rivals. This is not the case for this book. It is unique. While bustards are included in Jaime Samour's excellent "Avian Medicine" they are largely ignored in other texts as the majority of veterinary practitioners in the US and Europe (the major marketing areas for publishers!) will probably never work with them.

Therefore this book has no competition and even if very poor the reviewer would have to recommend it! Fortunately this reviewer faces no such dilemma! The book is excellent and contains a vast amount of knowledge on these species.

There were, I thought, grounds for complaint. My main area of interest is the Great Bustard not the Houbara. As I read through the pages I had a growing feeling that this was not a book about bustards but about the Houbara. Yes, I did then read the title! The title beautifully describes the contents of the book yet, even though the vast majority of the book is devoted to the Houbara, there is an awful lot for those working with other bustard species.

However, it is still a little sad that the chapters on captive management and breeding couldn't contain more on the successful Kori breeding programme in the United States or the Little Bustard in France. Minor complaint – the book is large enough already and there are plenty of references to much of this information.

The veterinary sections are, again, complete. They contain much in-depth knowledge on the medical problems of these species as well as diagnostic techniques, anaesthesia and surgery. This information ranges from the basic through to very advanced. I anticipated a book that would assist an experienced avian veterinarian about to work with novel species. Instead this is a book that will not only do this but will also be eminently suitable for those with little general avian experience and who do not have easy access to other sources of information – ie it will be perfect for use in the field (although a large rucksack will be needed!).

The picture quality is very good and there are plenty of them. I am sure that if I made a huge effort I could unearth many minor criticisms or some facts with which I disagree (this is actually unlikely – the authors have included so much of what is published on bustards that few arguments are not well covered!), however, I do not see the need – it is clearly a labour of love and to nitpick a text that represents huge amounts of work by all authors seems simply unjust.

The book is excellent and will be indispensable to the veterinarians as well as biologists and all involved in the captive management, conservation, and field studies of this and other bustard species.

It is hard to recommend it for those not directly working with bustards, although it is a well-written and interesting book and, to be honest, it is a book that covers the basics of clinical sampling, anaesthesia, surgery and therapeutic techniques very well. I would, therefore, be very happy to advise any veterinary student or inexperienced avian veterinarian to read it as well, even if their primary focus was with other avian species.

Congratulations to Tom and all the authors – this is an impressive work and I know that my copy will be very well-thumbed!

Reviewed by John Chitty BVetMed CertZooMed MRCVS

The Table of Contents of the book are available as a download on the WMENews website. Copies of Diseases and Medical Management of Houbara Bustards and Other Otidae are available from Tom Bailey. Contact: tom.bailey@dfh.ae

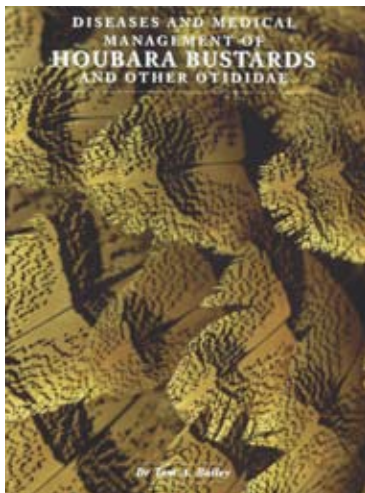


Fig1. Front cover of Diseases and Medical Management of Houbara Bustards and Other Otidae.



Fig2. Great bustard (© Nature Conservation Bureau)



Fig3. Marked distortion of the right leg of a kori bustard. This is due to a rotation of the tibiotarsus.



Fig4. A houbara bustard prepared for endoscopy in a surgical facility.



Fig5. Tube feeding is an important part of the management of anorectic bustards.



Fig6. Conjunctivitis in a white-bellied bustard caused by the eye fluke *Philophthalmus distomatosa*.