

Handbook of the Mammals of the World. Volume 2. Hoofed Mammals

By Don E. Wilson, and Russell A. Mittermeier (Editors). 2011. Lynx Edicions, Montseny, 8, 08193 Bellaterra, Barcelona, Spain. 886 pages. 160.00 EUR. Cloth.

The second tome in this series contains accounts of some of the world's most exciting animals. Nobody can fail to be impressed when they get close to their first wild Elephant, or be charmed by a baby with its rubbery, little trunk. This issue covers Aardvark, Hyraxes, Elephants, Pangolins, Horses and relatives, Rhinoceroses, Tapirs, Camels, Pigs and Peccaries, Hippopotamuses, the deer group [Chevrotains, Musk-deer, Deer], Hollow-horned Ruminants, Pronghorn and Giraffe and Okapi.

Each family has an introductory section that covers the systematics of the living and extinct species. While the extinct species are covered in this section they are not included with the species accounts. The authors discuss their choice of [living] species, including controversial splits and lumps. For example the African Savannah and Forest Elephants are split, but not the three Asian populations. The Giraffe is left as a single species, but six of the nine sub-species are illustrated. These decisions were easily digested, but as I read more of the book I became more overwhelmed. By the time the reader reaches Hollow-horned Ruminants it seems all populations that were previously considered sub-

species are now elevated to full status. Thanks to DNA there are 279 distinct species bovines; twice the number from five years ago. It appears I may have seen three, not two, species of Wildebeest. I need to check my notes and photographs to see if I can justify a new life mammal! It does not stop there. The Thompson's Gazelle [the cute little beast that so often ends up as a Cheetah's lunch] is split into two [another lifer?]. [This means you must look under S and E, not T in the index for Serengeti and Eastern Thompson's Gazelle] The Hartebeest complex now contains eight species, and there are a dozen and a half look-alike wild sheep. In all there are over 400 species in the book, with two thirds being Hollow-horned Ruminants.

The introductions to each family deal with habits and habitats as they relate to feeding and breeding. It also covers movements and social behaviour, critical elements for many of the wide-ranging mammals. These introductory sections are well illustrated by photographs. Some of these are truly memorable like the sleeping Eurasian Wild Boar mother with her little piglet snoozing on her belly out of the snow, but all are first-rate.

Then each species is illustrated on an identification plate, that is followed by an account, including a range map. The text gives a description to back up the plate and summarises the species biology. I found out some surprising information by reading these accounts. The beautiful Scimitar-horned Oryx has been extinct for about 40 years. Those I saw at the edge of the Sahara were re-introduced from zoo stock. The Dromedary is also extinct in the wild although there are some feral populations, primarily in Australia. Some of the animals in this book are important in the daily life of eastern cultures. Not only are they a valuable resource, but are part of legends and traditions. I have checked ranges, descriptions and other information and cannot find any problems.

There are three features that I find particularly enlightening. The first is how the reader is able to put species in perspective. For example the relationship between all the world's buffalo is easy to see. Simi-

larly seeing the three bison [American Bison, Wisent (or European Bison) and Yak] clearly shows their obvious relationship. The second feature is that the book covers all mammals, not just the showy ones. Check the mammal section of your library and you will find books on whales, big cats, bears and elephants. It is rare to find a book on the small beasts. So this volume lets you find out about the more obscure mammals like the pangolins and dik-diks. Finally, it is good to have the African gazelles and their allies treated systematically. It clarifies the confusion I have had when reading different field guides with mixture of English and, sometimes, scientific names.

Overall I think this a great book and an important addition to mammalian literature. It will be a valuable reference for many years to come. Expensive yes, but well worth the price.

ROY JOHN

2193 Emard Crescent, Ottawa, Ontario, K1J 6K5