

synopses of the topics. The subsequent chapters are organized into sections covering major geographic areas (e.g. Eurasia, southern hemisphere, oceans), with two to eighteen chapters per section. Each chapter covers an order or family of birds, using one to four species as examples. There is a map as well as a calendar showing migration and breeding times for most of the illustrated birds.

Although the book is worldwide in scope, it is dominated by a British point of view; after the typical migration pattern of a species is noted, the accidental occurrences in Britain (but nowhere else) are described (if such has occurred). The global perspective is worthwhile, though only a small fraction of the planet's migratory birds can be described.

There are a few mistakes scattered throughout the book; these include classifying the Great Horned Owl

as an irruptive species, labelling Lake Winnipeg and its neighbours as the Great Lakes and describing the furcula as a pit (it is the wishbone). Many folks will gloss over these, but the more demanding reader will catch them; mistakes are never desirable, but most of these are relatively minor.

In addition to covering distance migrants, the book pays some attention to altitudinal migrants. When appropriate, the authors have included conservation messages on topics such as introduced species, habitat loss and the implications of commercial fisheries on birds.

Overall, this wouldn't be a book I'd give one of my serious birder friends as a gift, but it would do nicely for the beginner who is just migrating into the hobby.

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Handbook of the Birds of the World Volume II – Old World Flycatchers to Old World Warblers

By Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott and David A. Christie (Editors). 2006. Lynx Edicions, Montseny, 8, 08193 Bellaterra, Barcelona, Spain. 800 pages. 199 Euros Cloth.

Handbook of the Birds of the World. Volume II covers eight families containing 733 species each with its own account and distribution map. The first of these is the Old World Flycatchers which, with the prejudices of youth, conjure up visions of Little Brown Jobs (LBJs). LBJs are the birders bane; small obscure birds that are difficult to see and identify. My first encounter with an Old World Flycatcher was the Spotted Flycatcher. This is an LBJ where "spotted" is an overstatement. They are only faint marks on the breast. This is a sweeping and somewhat unfair assessment as more than 40 percent of Old World Flycatchers are colourful. Indeed, the 22 members of *Cyrorus* are as colourful as North American Bluebirds.

In the next family, the Batises are small and largely black-and-white, whereas Wattle-eyes are somewhat more colourful with some orange and yellow. Many of the Monarch-flycatchers are a smart blue, but others are black and brown or black-and-white. However, the members of the small family of Paradise Flycatchers are among the most spectacular of the world's birds. One of my life's highlights was seeing the display of the black-and-white morph of the Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher. Similar and equally impressive species live in Africa and India. Kinglets and Firecrests is a family that is split between the old and new worlds. They are woodland sprites that can be surprisingly "cute" despite an initial dull impression. Gnatcatchers is a family of small, grey, long-tailed birds and is the only one in this volume that is confined to the new world. To my mind their counterparts are the Prinias of Africa and Asia.

Cisticolas and allies are a bit of a nightmare. Most of them are true LBJs being streaky or dull brown. Knowing their songs and distribution helps. Even the

easier to recognise birds like the Common Jery of Madagascar and the long-billed Tailor Bird of Asia can be a problem. They are so active that critical characteristics can be hard to see. Whenever you think you have seen all the relevant characteristics, after the bird has flown, you often discover there was something critical you missed!

The 270 species of Old World Warblers in the Sylviidae (with 14 species confined to the antique island of Madagascar) are mostly LBJs. They are some of the most difficult birds to identify in the field. This nightmare is composed of several genera with hyphenated names like bush-warbler, reed-warbler, leaf-warbler and swamp-warbler. While there are discernable differences between, say, leaf- and swamp-warblers within each group there are many look-alike species which vary only by minuscule differences in eye-stripe or bill length. I spent every lunch hour for two weeks beside a Willow Warbler's nest so that I could identify this species with confidence. This meant I could better see the subtle difference between Willow Warblers and Chifchafs [greener versus browner, etc.]. Unfortunately these birds are variable. The reader need only compare the photo of a pale, greyish Willow Warbler on page 551 with the brownish-yellow one on page 514 to understand this difficulty. It gets even worse with birds like the newly split Booted Warbler [*Hippolais caligata*] and Syke's Warbler [*H. rama*] Syke's Warbler winters all over India whereas *H. caligata* is found only on the eastern coast between the Ganges and Pondicherry. So the two species overlap in the east and are almost identical. As they do not sing in winter it will take a DNA test to separate them!

So how did *Handbook of the Birds of the World. Volume II* fare in dealing with birds that are not as magnificent as albatross or wildly coloured like parrots? It actually does remarkably well. Once again we have a well-organized and researched volume that adds to the

growing status of this project. As each new volume is produced it adds to the benchmark status of the existing volumes as a primary source of information on the world's birds. The format has remained stable for the last several volumes, which makes it easy to use and compare. The photos are top rate despite the small and obscure nature of these species. I know how difficult

it is to get **any** photographs of such little and active sprites, let alone artistic ones of birds singing or displaying. *Handbook of the Birds of the World* has now reached biblical reference status.

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Conservation of the Black-tailed Prairie Dog: Saving North America's Western Grasslands

Edited by John Hoogland. 2006. Island Press, Washington, DC. 350 pages paperback U.S. \$35.

It is amazing how the conservation of an animal as interesting and entertaining as the Black-tailed Prairie Dog can be so controversial. But controversial it has been in the last few decades as environmental interests have woken up to the fact that the campaign of Prairie Dog poisoning and habitat loss has resulted in a range contraction to less than 2% of the historical geographic distribution. To this day many ranchers actively dislike Prairie Dogs for their competition with livestock for rangeland resources. In contrast, some conservation practitioners think that enough other species rely on the habitat created on Prairie Dog colonies that Prairie Dogs should be considered a keystone species. In my own practice as a biologist at Grasslands National Park, Saskatchewan, I have frequently been taken aback by how polarized the opinions on Prairie Dogs can be between individuals and groups that often share many similar core values.

The book, *Conservation of the Black-tailed Prairie Dog: Saving North America's Western Grasslands* is the brain child of Dr. John Hoogland who has researched the behaviour of Prairie Dogs at Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota since the mid-1970s. Dr. Hoogland felt that there was a need to summarize the extensive scientific literature on the Black-tailed Prairie Dog in a non-technical format designed to highlight the information's relevance to conservation. To accomplish this Dr. Hoogland engaged 30 other specialists and challenged them to draw out the lessons for conservation from their areas of specialty. These lessons are explored through 18 chapters on topics such

as natural history, social behaviour, competition with livestock, keystone species, human attitudes, and how to establish new colonies of Prairie Dogs. The chapter authors are all respected specialists and do an excellent job of relating their topic area to the central theme of the book: the conservation of Black-tail Prairie Dogs.

The only significant criticism I have is that Dr. Hoogland repeatedly states in Chapter 2 that Black-tailed Prairie Dogs do not hibernate. This is odd because published studies have shown that Black-tailed Prairie Dogs use facultative torpor (Lehmer et al. 2001). In fact, in southwestern Saskatchewan, at the northern edge of their distribution, Black-tailed Prairie Dogs spend as much as 95 days a year in winter torpor bouts lasting 7.6 to 13.6 days with minimum core body temperatures ranging from 7.1 to 11.6°C (Gummer 2005). Clearly, this behaviour deserved to be recognized and discussed as to how it might relate to efforts to conserve this species. Despite this small failing, I fully recommend this book to anyone interested in the conservation of this fascinating social rodent or who wants to become better informed on conservation issues on the Great Plains.

Literature Cited

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Lehmer, E. M., B. Van Horne, B. Kulbartz, and G. L. Florant. 2001. Facultative torpor in free-ranging black-tailed prairie dogs (*Cynomys ludovicianus*). *Journal of Mammology*, 82(2): 551–557.

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Migrating Raptors of the World: Their Ecology and Conservation

By Keith L. Bildstein. Cornell University Press, Sage House, 512 East State Street, Ithaca, New York 14850 USA. 332 pages. U.S.\$35.00 Cloth.

Raptors and bird migration both hold great fascination throughout the world, so the combination of the two topics makes for an irresistible book. Bildstein is a foremost world authority. Based at Hawk Mountain, the world's first site dedicated to the conservation of hawks and the watching of their migration, he is the Sarkis Acopian Director of Conservation Science. Bildstein tells us that "a bad day at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary is better than a good day anywhere else."

His wide knowledge derives in part from his travels to each of the world's main hawk-watching sites. Figure 1 displays the five major hawk pathways throughout the world and Figure 7 shows the 12 locations where 100 000 or more raptors pass by. In addition to studies at Hawk Mountain, banding of thousands of raptors has occurred at Cedar Grove, Wisconsin; Cape May, New Jersey; Hawk Ridge on Lake Superior, Minnesota; the Goshute Mountains, Nevada; the Manzano Mountains, New Mexico, and Golden Gate Observatory, California. Notable Old World banding sites are Chokpak Pass, Kazakhstan, and Elat, Israel. Switching