

**Book Review Editor's note:** Continuing with our decision to investigate suitable websites and, if appropriate, include their reviews, I have written the following review. If others know of similar suitable sites and are moved to submit a review please contact me at [r.john@rogers.com](mailto:r.john@rogers.com).

## HBW IBC

By Josep del Hoyo <http://ibc.hbw.com/ibc/>

The Internet Bird Collection is sponsored by *Handbook of the Birds of the World* [HBW], Lynx Edicions, of Barcelona, Spain, and is a video library of birds. It is arranged in taxonomic order by order and family using the scientific name. English names follow in parentheses for each family. For example, Struthioniformes is followed by Struthionidae (Ostrich). When you click the family you will reach a listing, ordered by genus, and giving the scientific and English names. This is a very simple way to get to your species of interest. The introduction page has current notes on the status of the website and should be read.

The site currently contains over 27 000 videos of 5350 species or about 55% of the known list of birds. Each video is typically 30 or so seconds long, but this varies. Some of the birds covered have several videos while others have only one or two. For example: there are 19 videos of the Great Blue Heron and only one of the Chinese Egret. But take care, while the Great Blue sequence shows 19 different birds (including #14 amusingly described as "A bird walking on water"), the five views of Guam Rail are actually four of the same bird and one of a zoo specimen. If you want to see typical action both are good, but offer little about plumage variation for the rail.

Once you are at the species level you need either the English as given in HBW or the scientific name. Thus you must use Crested Honey Buzzard instead of the more widespread Oriental Honey Buzzard (or *Pernis ptilorhyncus*). Heuglin's Gull is a little more difficult. Before it was split it was in the Lesser Black-backed Gull complex, so it is included as *Larus fuscus* ssp. *heuglini*, Heuglin's Gull, under video 10 of that species. Recent splits like the Indian Blackbird [*Turdus similimus*] are not included. I was having problems finding the Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, *Dendrocopus nanus*, until I discovered it as Brown-capped Woodpecker, *Dendrocopus moluccensis*.

## Frog

By Thomas Marent. 2008. DK Publishing, 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014 USA. 280 pages. 30.00 USD, 33.00 CAD.

This is a truly spectacular coffee table book 12 3/8 by 11 3/8 inches by a master Swiss-born 42-year-old photographer who has travelled widely, often to remote areas, in his search for, and deep appreciation of, his subjects. His earlier books were *Butterfly* and *Rainforest*. The newest, *Frog*, is primarily built of over 400 spectacularly sharp colour photographs, often a full

Once you find your target species, you can then select from the list of videos available. These range in number from zero to over twenty. Each one is ranked, with five as the best. While five might mean the best photo, I often found the lower rankings more useful. The best photos were typically beautiful, close-up portraits of sitting adult birds. Lovely to look at, but not as informative of more distant shots of birds running through habitat or flying around. Zoo shots were the least useful, yet were better than none at all.

I have used this site for about a year now, generally for birds I hoped to see in the near future and with those actions I was not familiar (Greater Spotted Eagle, Greenish Warbler). I have also used it to verify identities of birds seen that cause uncertainty (Alder Flycatcher, Thayer's Gull).

The author of the site, Josep del Hoyo, makes frequent birding trips and brings back new videos. He is constantly adding to and upgrading the site. He has appealed to anyone who wants to share this task to supply a video. When he adds a video he also provides a link to the videographer. Here you can find a list of the donated videos and a short biography. Thus we can learn that Julien Rochefort of Paris has contributed 158 videos of European birds. Similar contributions have been made by others from around the world.

There is an option to play a "high quality" video, but I have been unable to connect to this feature. The quality of the "regular" videos is generally good and I have not the incentive to solve this problem.

This is a wonderful resource for all birders. It is particularly useful to open it twice and put the videos side by side. You can do this with birds that are difficult to separate (for example Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler) or two get two views of the same species under different conditions. And it will only get better.

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page for one individual or feature, of living amphibians. Most are frogs but with a few token salamanders—about 18 of the latter, on 13 pages (94-97, 132-133, 200, 268-273). A third group, the more secretive caecilians is not included. The salamanders selected are European (fire salamanders and newts) but the frogs range over the world. For these, a few European, North American, and Australian species are featured, but most are from the more diverse tropical frog faunas. Borneo, Madagascar, Peru, Colombia, and Costa Rica

are among the countries with included species. There are full top and side views of adults, but transforming juveniles, tadpoles and eggs and particular features such as eyes or skin are also included.

Marent emphasises in his introduction that there are some 6300 recognized species of amphibians, of which about 2000 are currently threatened with extinction due to habitat loss through human use expansion, exacerbated by co-increasing pollution, disease, collection for food or pets, and climate change. The text is sidebar photo captions inset throughout the book. Topics covered are identity (habitats, tree frogs, glass frogs, poison dart frogs, species variation: strawberry poison dart frogs, mantellas, other frogs, toads, newts and salamanders), body form (eyes, ears, nostrils, feet and legs, skin), survival (feeding, methods of movement, night versus day, camouflage, using poisons, last line of defense, unwanted competition) and reproduction (life

cycle, attracting mates, mating, sexual differences, spawn, tadpoles, froglets, newt reproduction).

The text concludes with a three-page listing of a conventional division into amphibian families, with common name, distribution, size (number of species) and brief description. Finally, there is a comprehensive index of both common and scientific names and topics, and brief acknowledgments.

This is a beautiful and superbly produced book full of interesting facts which bring the reader closer to an appreciation of the uniqueness and colourfulness of living amphibians more quickly than any field guide or textbook on them, though the latter have vastly more detail.

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### Rattlers, Peepers & Snappers

By Vince Franke and Jim Andrews. 2008. Peregrine Productions LLC at [www.rpsdvd.com](http://www.rpsdvd.com). DVD. 24.95 USD,

Subtitled "The first complete DVD guide to all the amphibians and reptiles that breed in New England", one disc covers 52 species in these groups dynamically and with immediacy not possible in a static book format. Included are the majority of the species that occur in eastern Canada and it is relevant for herpetologists and naturalists over all of northeastern North America.

It is an ideal learning or teaching tool. The subject is covered effectively and in depth in some three hours and includes, in individual sections, identification and life history of each species through diagnosis by live-action outings to view habitat and behaviour with discussion by a varied lot of researchers. As well there are fact sheets, quizzes, "resource pages" and the calls of each frog species. The amphibian program covers varied topics: spring migration, road crossings, vernal pools, stream salamanders, finding frogs, and Wood Frog research while the reptile program includes, snakes and skinks, Box Turtle research. Timber Rattlesnakes, worm snakes, tracking Racers, Copperheads, fall migration, turtle tunnels, and nesting turtles.

For this production Jim Andrews is joined by Vince Franke of Peregrine Productions whose superb field photography day or night, terrestrial or aquatic, is a

perfect companion for the commentaries by Andrews and others. Andrews has long established himself as Vermont's premier promoter of herpetology and spear-headed *The Atlas of the Amphibians and Reptiles of Vermont December, 2001* by James S. Andrews and 1400 dedicated volunteers and organizations (see book review *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 116(4): 666-667).

The accuracy and immediacy of the new DVD is a model for any future efforts elsewhere. It promotes a greater understanding of these creatures, the immediate need and means for their effective conservation, and for the accurate recording of further observations to augment our understanding of their distribution and behaviour. Viewed in total or as short topical segments (individually readily accessible from the menu), the visual quality, the enthusiasm for the subject portrayed, and the accuracy and scope of the material presented are truly outstanding. From the casual to the serious, beginner to veteran naturalist, every viewer can gain from this production a greater understanding of the diversity and the conservation imperative of these fascinating animals and of the people who are their dedicated observers.

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### BOTANY

#### Aromatic Plants in China

By Wang Yumei. 2008. Science Press, Beijing, China. 1069 pages, 180.00 CNY.

Aromatic plants are plants whose vegetative or reproductive organs are able to secrete or accumulate essen-

tial oil, volatile aromatic oil, or spice substances or volatilization-difficult balata used as the raw materials for daily life or industrial production. The majority of aromatic plants are seed plants. Volatile aromatic sub-