
Reviews

Handbook of the Birds of the World. Volume 14: 2009. Bush-shrikes to Old World Sparrows. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. del Hoyo, J, Elliot, A and Christie, D.A (eds). 896 pages, including 51 colour plates, 657 photos and 485 distribution maps. Price £185.00 (approx. US\$305/€203). ISBN-13: 978-84-96553-50-7

FRANK LAMBERT

Email: flambertemail@yahoo.co.uk

The 14th volume of “HBW” once again treats us to a feast of superb photographs, authoritative text and impressive plates. This volume covers a very diverse group of birds, the vast majority of which are Old World or Australasian in distribution. As such it is an important reference for birds that occur in Indonesia, covering the Dicruridae (Drongos), Grallinidae (Mudlarks), Artamidae (Woodswallows), Cracticidae (Butcherbirds), Pityriaseidae (Bristlehead), Ptilonorhynchidae (Bowerbirds), Paradisaeidae (Birds-of-paradise), Corvidae (Crows), Sturnidae (Starlings), and Passeridae (Old World Sparrows).

The Foreword, in a marked departure from the usual more scientific topics covered, is a short essay on “Birding Past, Present and Future – a Global View”, in which Stephen Moss sets out to show how birding has gone from the “preserve of a few eccentric enthusiasts to the mass-participation leisure activity of today” in the last 100 years. With some 46 million “birders” in the USA (which sounds unlikely, but the figure has been manipulated by the US Fish and Wildlife Service by counting anyone who watches birds in and around their homes as a birder) and some 2.85 million “active birders” in the UK, the essay is not surprisingly focused on material from these two countries. Nevertheless, the essay is wide-ranging and contains something for everyone. I found the analysis of how much money birding generates for various economies of particular interest. In the USA, wildlife-watchers (of whom birders form the vast majority) spend almost US\$32 billion in pursuit of their hobby (presumably over their lifetime, though this is not stated), of which nearly US\$2 billion goes on optics, but even more – \$2.2 billion – is spent on bird food. According to the US Fish and Wildlife survey, the overall impact of wildlife-watching on US economic output is apparently even more, at US\$85 billion a year, producing \$13 billion in tax revenues and creating some 860,000 jobs.

The first thing that most HBW14 owners or readers will probably do will be to look at the illustrations and photographs. As usual, the illustrations are generally of a very high standard, but I was a little disappointed to see so few juvenile plumages depicted. For example, it seems odd that none of the young plumages of *Aplonis* starlings are depicted since these are very distinctive. There is one photograph of an immature *Aplonis*, but this is barely useful. Again, the photography is impressive and there are numerous outstanding photographs, the

vast majority taken in the wild although those of some Indonesian species look like they could be of captive birds. I particularly appreciated the photographs of the variations of bowers and dance floors of the bowerbirds and the displaying male birds-of-paradise. They are simply incredible! The elaborately decorated bower of the Vogelkop Bowerbird *Amblyornis inornata* (page 367), an Indonesian endemic, is arguably the most spectacular construction of any bird. Another photograph that caught my attention was that of the Raggiana Bird-of-Paradise *Paradisaea raggiana* on page 437: this individual appears very odd because it is surely a hybrid between Raggiana and either Greater Bird-of-Paradise *P. apoda* or Lesser Bird-of-Paradise *P. minor*. As mentioned in the text, members of this genus apparently manage to hybridize regularly.

Once again I sense some inconsistency in the taxonomic treatments of the various families – no doubt as a result of different approaches by the various authors. For example, the Hill Mynas in the genus *Gracula* are here represented by five species (including endemic species on the west Sumatran islands of Nias and Enggano) even though some biologists may feel that the justification for this treatment has been inadequately documented in the scientific literature. In contrast, when it comes to the black corvids in the genus *Corvus*, HBW mostly takes a more cautious approach. Hence, none of the eight subspecies of Slender-billed Crow *Corvus enca* (distributed from the Greater Sundas to the Philippines and Sulawesi region) are treated as good species. Based on my own field experience in the region I am convinced that there must be at least four! Indeed, the IOC already recognises one of these, the endemic Seram taxon *violaceus* as a separate species, Violet Crow. The same goes for Large-billed Crow *C. macrorhynchos*, even though the IOC and recent field guides (e.g. Rasmussen and Anderton 2005, Robson 2008, Myers 2009) have recognised a number of different species, most notably Eastern Jungle Crow *C. levaillantii*, and Indian Jungle Crow *C. culminates*. These splits are still controversial, in part because of the complexity of the issues involved, and it is not surprising that HBW has taken a cautious approach. On the other hand, HBW recognises another black corvid, the Bismarck Crow *C. insularis* (a split from Torresian Crow *C. orru*) apparently on the basis of two unpublished manuscripts (though I don't wish to imply here that I don't agree with treating *C. insularis* as a good species).

The Birds-of-Paradise are one of my favourite bird families, and I was interested to see that HBW recognises one “new” species, the Foja Parotia *Parotia berlepschi*. However, I was a little surprised that Growling Riflebird *Ptiloris intercedens*, a split (recognised by IOC) from Magnificent Riflebird *Ptiloris magnificus* is not recognised here. The vocalisations of Growling Riflebird are so different from those of Magnificent Riflebird that it seems inconceivable to me that they should be treated as the same species (compare recordings XC38119 with XC38120 at (www.xeno-canto.org/asia)). Also in contrast to IOC, HBW has retained the so-called satinbirds (Loria's *Cnemophilus loriae*, Crested *C. macgregorii* and Yellow-breasted Birds-of-Paradise *Loboparadisea sericea*) within the Paradisaedae; IOC placed these three species

in their own family, Cnemophilidae (see the December 2009 IOC list version 2.3 at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org/index.html>), though whether they remain in their own family remains to be seen.

Nevertheless, it has to be recognised that the authors and editors of HBW are working in a time of incredible taxonomic change, and deciding what to include as a species versus a subspecies must often be a vexing task. The IOC list is updated every 3-4 months, with changes to English and scientific names, changes to the names of genera and the addition of newly discovered or split species. Keeping up with that is impossible in a “static” piece of work such as HBW, so the taxonomy followed is inevitably going to be recognised as out-of-date very rapidly. For example, within the next decade it seems likely that within the Corvidae alone there will be an additional ten or more species recognised that are not treated as species by HBW. Despite this, HBW has made a very serious effort to illustrate and describe the vast majority of significantly different taxa that may warrant species status.

A few unfamiliar English names appear in this volume, such as Lauterbach’s Bowerbird *Chlamydera lauterbachii*, which everywhere else in recent times has normally been called Yellow-breasted Bowerbird. Most unfamiliar English names in HBW14, however, result from the inclusion of newly recognised species, such as the Masked Bowerbird *Sericulus aureus* (split from Flame Bowerbird *S. ardens*), and Tablas Drongo *Dicrurus menagei* (a Philippine species split from Hair-crested Drongo *D. hottentottus*). As with the corvids, much needs to be learnt about the taxonomic affinities of the drongos in the Indonesian archipelago and it is worth noting that seven of the 14 recognised subspecies of *D. hottentottus* occur in Indonesia.

As with all recent volumes of HBW this one is well-researched and mostly up to date. But some of the authors are still perhaps unaware that they can access the vocalisations of many bird species on-line. For example, the vocalisation of Long-tailed Paradigalla *Paradigalla carunculata* is available on xeno-canto (XC26333) but in the HBW species account it simply says “VOICE: No information available”. Perhaps in the last two volumes of HBW cross-reference to vocalisations that are available on this website and on the new Michigan State University Avian Vocalizations Center website (www.zoology.msu.edu/Avocet) could be included. Authors could also of course make requests through the Oriental Bird Club list-serve to solicit vocalisations of oriental taxa for which commercially available sounds are not available.

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Reviews

Handbook of the Birds of the World. Volume 15: 2010. Weavers to New World Warblers. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. del Hoyo, J, Elliot, A and Christie, D.A (eds). 880 pages, including 61 colour plates, 495 photos and 614 distribution maps. Price €212 (approx. US\$299, £186.00). ISBN-13: 978-84-96553-68-2

FRANK LAMBERT

Email: flambertemail@yahoo.co.uk

This volume of HBW, the penultimate volume, covers some of the best-studied of all species, and some of the most familiar birds in many parts of the world. Families that are covered in this volume and which are represented in Indonesia are the Ploceidae (Weavers), Estrildidae (Waxbills – which includes munias and mannikins) and Fringillidae (Finches). The book starts with a 55-page foreword on "Conservation of the world's birds: the view from 2010" by Stuart Butchart, Nigel Collar, Alison Stattersfield and Leon Bennun, all of whom work in the BirdLife International Secretariat in Cambridge, UK. For anyone interested in bird conservation issues, this essay provides an excellent overview of the status of the world's birds, the most important pressures they face, and how these threats can be potentially tackled. The review is succinct yet comprehensive, and well worth taking the time to read – the following paragraphs give only a taste of the detail that is packed into it.

Altogether, 1,240 bird species (12.5%) are now threatened with global extinction and 132 species are known to have gone extinct during or since the sixteenth century. An additional four species are considered to be extinct in the wild (with populations surviving in captivity). Extinctions are continuing: 18 bird species were lost in the last quarter of the twentieth century and another three are believed to have disappeared since 2000. Furthermore, the authors point out that 13 of the 190 species considered to be Critically Endangered may already be extinct (and hence are tagged as Possibly Extinct in the Wild) and others in this highest threat category will certainly be lost if no targeted conservation action is taken. **Indonesia** ranks second in the world in having almost 120 threatened bird species, only exceeded by Brazil, and of these, just over half are endemic.

The authors provide an excellent, if not rather depressing, analysis of the distribution and habitats of threatened bird species, and an analysis of trends (including a reminder that even many of our "common" birds are becoming much rarer) before embarking on a lengthy discussion on the principal threats to birds. These include many that we are all too familiar with, such as agricultural intensification (resulting in habitat destruction and degradation); unsustainable forestry; the spread of invasive alien species and disease (particularly relevant to the many smaller islands of Indonesia); over-exploitation (hunting and trade, and not forgetting commercial fisheries which are impacting dramatically on many

seabirds). Other threats that are covered that are perhaps less well understood by the public at large include changes in fire regimes, inappropriate water management, and various types of pollution. The final threat covered is of course one of the most topical, namely climate change.

Whilst the effects of human-induced climate change are debated by some, most of us now accept that increased greenhouse gas emissions are already resulting in slowly increasing temperatures, sea-level rises and shifts in precipitation patterns and snow cover. These changes to our planet are likely to have sweeping and dramatic effects on biodiversity during this century. Whilst some species may well benefit, for most species climate change will have negative effects through impacts on distribution, abundance, and behaviour. Data compiled by BirdLife International show that climate change impacts have already been documented for 400 bird species, and there are likely many more species that are experiencing effects that we do not yet know about. The essay provides the reader with a brief account of the impacts through known examples before informing us of the likely future impacts of climate change on birds. We learn, for example, that the projected breeding ranges of European species will shift north-eastwards by 260-880 km depending on the emission scenario and that on average, future ranges are likely to be 20% smaller than they are now and may only overlap by about 40% with present ranges. This kind of impact will inevitably cause serious problems for many species, in particular those living nearer the poles, and for higher-latitude migrants (which will face longer migrations).

Many mountain-top species with limited opportunities for dispersal are also likely to be seriously affected by climate change, including perhaps some of the montane endemics of Indonesia. However, most research to date on the effects of climate change on birds is relevant to temperate birds, so little is understood about the effects on bird populations in largely tropical zones like Indonesia. However, it has been predicted that in North Queensland, Australia, the distributional extent of 13 endemic montane tropical rainforest bird species will shrink dramatically, and this kind of effect will presumably affect montane birds in West Papua, Wallacea and other parts of Indonesia (see Noske 2010). Sea level rises will also undoubtedly have serious consequences for Indonesian birds (not to mention for people living in cities near sea level, such as Jakarta!). For example, one endemic riverine New Guinea bird, White-bellied Pitohui (*Pitohui incertus*) would lose about 40% of its habitat if the sea rises 1 metre.

Global warming and sea-level rise will affect not only biodiversity of course, but will surely create profound problems for the next few generations of people on this small planet of ours, unless our governments make sincere efforts to tackle the underlying causes. The final part of the Foreword delves into some of the possible solutions to the threats faced by birds, under the title of "What can we do?", and within this 13-page summary many of the actions that our communities and governments should be working to achieve are mentioned. As pointed out by the authors "Ultimately, biodiversity will only be conserved if

enough people care about nature and recognise its importance for human livelihoods and well-being, as well as its intrinsic value. Changes in attitudes and approaches are needed at local, regional and global scales among individuals (that's you and me!), communities, businesses and governments." The price-tag for improving the status of the world's threatened species is high, but put into perspective not insurmountable: it is estimated that the cost of saving all the worlds Critically Endangered birds would be less than the sum spent by the USA every four days on the war in Iraq.

The Foreword is followed with the standard approach of HBW that we are now so familiar with. This volume has fewer photographs (495) than the most recent two volumes, with an incredible 657 photos in HBW14 and 546 in HBW13, but as usual the standard of the photos used is excellent. It was somewhat disappointing, however, not to see any photographs of the breathtaking display flights of paradise-whydahs.

For most of the families covered, there are few taxonomic surprises, but there is one recently recognised Indonesian endemic, Timor Zebra Finch *Taeniopygia guttata* (formerly considered conspecific with Australian Zebra Finch *T. castanotis* (see Mason, this volume). One "taxon" not included in HBW15 is Cream-bellied Munia *Lonchura pallidiventer*, which is mentioned under Chestnut Munia as "believed to be a hybrid". This attractive munia was described by Robin Restall (1996a; and see the excellent Plate 70 in Restall 1996b) from a series of nine specimens from the Jakarta bird market that were said to have come from the hinterland of Southeast Kalimantan. Although this may well eventually be shown to be a hybrid, I believe that there is the possibility that this is a good species that has just been over-looked.

The only families treated in HBW15 that include Indonesian birds are the weavers, Estrildid finches and the "true" finches Fringillidae. Weavers are represented by three Indonesian-occurring species, Asian Golden Weaver *Ploceus hypoxanthus*, Baya Weaver *P. philippinus* (which, incidentally, does not occur in the Philippines) and Steaked Weaver *P. manyar*. Estrildid finches in Indonesia are represented by Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava* (deliciously named Strawberry Waxbill in White & Bruce 1986), five species of parrotfinch *Erythrura* spp., Mountain Firetail *Oreostruthus fuliginosus*, Crimson Finch *Neochmia phaeton* (West Papua), Timor Zebra Finch *Taeniopygia guttata*, Java Sparrow *Lonchura oryzivora* (considered threatened in its native range but introduced to at least 27 islands or countries!) and Timor Sparrow *L. fuscata* (with Java Sparrow, often placed in the genus *Padda*) and 21 species of other munias and mannikins (*Lonchura* spp.).

It seems rather odd, but of 144 species of "true finches", only one species, Mountain Serin *Serinus estherae* has made it to Indonesia. It has a very disjunct distribution, with five subspecies distributed in the mountains of north Sumatra, West and East Java, south Sulawesi and Mindanao (Philippines). The population in North-central Sulawesi has not yet been assigned to a subspecies. HBW notes

that although currently included in the genus *Serinus*, this species may in fact be more closely related to *Carduelis* and may represent more than one species.

As a complement to HBW, and with the ultimate goal of disseminating knowledge about the world's avifauna, in 2002 Lynx Edicions started the *Internet Bird Collection* (<http://ibc.lynxeds.com>). It is a freely accessible, on-line audiovisual library of the world's birds, where visitors can view or post videos, photos and sound recordings showing a variety of biological aspects (e.g. subspecies, plumages, feeding, and breeding) for every species. The IBC is a very useful source of reference, and currently holds more than 45,000 videos and 32,000 photos representing more than 80% of the world's species.

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