

Reviews

**Handbook of the Birds of the World, Volume 9: Cotingas to Wagtails.
del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A. and Christie, D. (eds).
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Volume 9 of the Handbook of the Birds of the World (HBW) is largely devoted to the suboscine passerines not included in HBW volume 8, namely the Cotingas, Manakins, Tyrant-flycatchers, New Zealand Wrens, Scrub-birds and Lyrebirds; none of these groups occur in Indonesia. The rest of the volume covers the larks, swallows and martins, and the pipits and wagtails, of which only five species occur in Indonesia as residents, and a further 11 or 12 have been recorded as migrants or vagrants (the total depends on whether Richard's Pipit, *Anthus richardii* is included: there is a skin from Misool that may refer to this species (Mees 1965: 177).

The book contains a brief foreword by Richard Banks on ornithological nomenclature, a rather complicated subject that is useful to be aware of if you are lucky enough to discover a new taxon: currently 34 new species are being described worldwide each year.

This tome is as huge and impressive as was Volume 8; it contains 809 distribution maps, c. 6,000 bibliographical references, 440 superb colour photographs and 78 colour plates. As we have come to expect, the standard and diversity of photography and the quality of the illustrations continues to be very impressive, though it may have been useful to illustrate more of the hirundines in flight (for example, the house martins *Delichon* spp). Overall, the standard of information remains high, though for Asian pipits and wagtails, especially for their identification, distribution and for illustrations, you would be better to refer to the comprehensive work of Alström & Mild (2003). For example, the Handbook illustrates only males of two subspecies of the White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* that can be expected in Indonesia, *M. a. leucopsis* and *M. a. baicalensis*. These two races, as well as *M. a. lugens*, have all reached Australia as vagrants, so any of them could turn up in Indonesia. There is a specimen of *leucopsis* in the British Museum that may have been collected in Java (S. van Balen, pers. comm.)

The taxonomy and systematics of some of the pipits and wagtails, and swallows and martins, remains complex and controversial. For example, the 65 species of pipits and wagtails recognized by the Handbook include ten that occur in the Oriental Region, but of these, several, including some occurring in Indonesia as migrants, may represent more than one species. Mitochondrial DNA studies suggest, for example, that the Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* (17 subspecies recognized, following the traditional treatment) may involve three separate species. Indeed, Rasmussen and Anderton (2005) recognize a number of full species that are not treated as such in the Handbook, including Eastern Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla tschutschensis*, of which the nominate subspecies and the subspecies *M. t. taivana* winter in Indonesia (unfortunately, only the male of *M. t. tschutschensis* is illustrated in the

Handbook). A third subspecies, *M. t. macronyx*, which mainly winters in Peninsular Malaysia, has also been collected in Sumatra (Junge 1948).

Amongst the swallows, the Handbook recognises the Rufous-bellied Swallow *Cecropis badia*, endemic to the Malay Peninsula, as a full species, following Dekker and Dickinson (2001). Although supposedly a resident, this taxon could potentially occur in Indonesia as a vagrant and should be looked for in the Greater Sunda Islands. The Australasian Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae exiguus*, which occurs in eastern New Guinea, is another bird covered by the Handbook that could potentially be found in Indonesia, in grasslands in the highlands of West Papua.

References

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Handbook of the Birds of the World, Volume 10: Cuckoo-shrikes to Thrushes. del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A. and Christie, D. (eds). Lynx Edicions. ISBN 84-87334-695

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The Handbook of the Birds of the World (HBW) volume 10 is a key reference for birders interested in Indonesian ornithology, covering a number of families that are well represented in the archipelago, namely the Campephagidae (cuckoo-shrikes, minivets, flycatcher-shrikes, wood-shrikes, trillers), Pycnonotidae (bulbuls), Chloropseidae (leafbirds), Irenidae (fairy-bluebirds), Aegithonidae (ioras) and the huge family Turdidae, which comprises the 336 species of thrushes, chats, robins, whistling-thrushes, rock-thrushes, shamas and forktails. Dippers, wrens, Hypocolius, accentors and waxwings also appear in this volume. Of all the recent Handbook volumes, this is perhaps the most important to have on your bookshelf if you are a keen Oriental birder with a passion for Indonesia!

The foreword, "the ecology and impact of non-indigenous birds" makes interesting reading, though primarily draws on data and examples from New Zealand and Hawaii, with almost no reference to the Oriental region. Nevertheless, this is an incredibly important subject for ornithologists, considering that more than 200 bird species have successfully established in non-indigenous lands, and that such species represent the second-most-frequent threat of species extinction after habitat loss, especially on oceanic islands. Some of the most successful non-indigenous bird species are Oriental in origin, such as various mynas and Java Sparrow *Padda oryzivora*. In the context of Indonesia, where bird trade is such a widespread and conspicuous phenomenon, the threat to indigenous species posed by introduced birds may prove to be of major concern, though it is presently a completely under-studied one. Indeed, the trade in birds, a subject that elicits great passions amongst birders even though the various issues relating to trade are probably poorly understood by most, would be an excellent topic for a foreword in future Handbooks.

As with recent volumes, this is a huge tome (896 pages), with a remarkable diversity of excellent photographs (427) and 737 distribution maps to accompany the 723 species accounts. The quality of maps, however, is variable. For many species occurring on Borneo and Sumatra, the map shows the entire island as the range of the species, even for species that are rarely encountered above 900 m asl (e.g. Finsch's Bulbul *Alophoixus finschii*, Olive-winged Bulbul *Pycnonotus plumosus*, and two *Copsychus* species on Borneo) whilst the highly localized Hook-billed Bulbul *Setornis criniger* is shown to occur throughout Borneo. In contrast, maps for some (but not all) Sundaic Campephagids and Turdids, such as the Bar-bellied Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina striata*, Black-breasted Fruithunter *Chlamydochaera jefferyi* and Chestnut-capped Thrush *Zoothera interpres*, appear to be much more precise. Mapping, of course, is highly time-consuming and never going to be completely accurate, but it should be fairly easy to exclude the mountains (or land above 1,000m) from the depicted range of lowland birds. One map that may be inaccurate is that for Straw-

headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus zeylanicus*, which excludes most of Sumatra from the species range. Whilst this species has, indeed, almost disappeared from Sumatra due to trapping, it nevertheless almost certainly occurred in recent times in central Sumatra, where trappers claim to have captured birds in and around KerinciSeblat National Park.

This volume of the Handbook contains many taxonomic revisions, particularly in relation to the generic names of many species, but also as to which taxa are treated as full species. Indeed, there are too many taxonomic decisions worthy of note to include all in this review. Some of the more important ones, relating to Indonesia, are outlined below.

But first, it is worth pointing out that there seems to be some inconsistency in the approach of the different family authors in dealing with taxonomic issues. Some authors appear to have adopted a very conservative approach, apparently mainly following existing taxonomy rather than taking the opportunity to re-evaluate the ranking of some of the more obvious candidates for species. Whilst some would argue that the Handbook is not the place to elevate subspecific taxa to species level, there are already precedents in previous volumes, and many birders, including professionals, take taxonomic decisions made by Handbook family authors very seriously. Hence, I was somewhat disappointed to see little attempt to revise the taxonomy of the Campephagidae in this volume, particularly since there are some very obvious good candidates for elevation to species level, and also because some of these were elevated to species level in the recent excellent Indian handbook (Rasmussen and Anderton 2005) which is also published by Lynx Editions (e.g. *Coracina dobsoni* of the Andamans and *Tephrodornis sylvicola* of the Western Ghats) but not in HBW. In particular, *Coracina*, with 51 species, is represented in Indonesia by no less than 29 species. Some of these are represented on various islands by very different looking subspecies, some of which I am sure will turn out to be good species. One such example is Wallacean Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina personata* which has six subspecies in the eastern Lesser Sunda island arc, some highly differentiated (compare illustrations on Plate 1). Other examples are Bar-bellied Cuckoo-shrike *C. striata*, with seven races in Indonesia, and Slender-billed Cicadabird *C. tenuirostris*, with 14 of 30 races occurring in Indonesia. With a little additional research, sufficient data would probably have revealed that at least some of the taxa concerned should be elevated to species level. Perhaps, however, some of the Handbook authors have inadequate access to skin collections and relevant literature to undertake such work.

The taxonomy of many polytypic species in the Sundaic region and in Wallacea requires close scrutiny, and I was happy to see that the species accounts for leafbirds, bulbuls and thrushes reflect this need. Elevated to species rank in the Handbook are Sumatran Leafbird *Chloropsis media* (split from Golden-fronted Leafbird *C. aurifrons*), Bornean Leafbird *C. kinabaluensis* (split from Blue-winged Leafbird *C. cochinchinensis*), Northern Golden Bulbul *Thapsinillas longirostris* (North Moluccas and Sulawesi region), Southern Golden Bulbul *T. affinis* (Buru, Seram, Ambon), Cinereous Bulbul *Hemixos cinereus* (Sunda region), Ruby-throated Bulbul *Pycnonotus dispar* (Sumatra, Java), and Bornean Bulbul *P. montis*. For Indonesian thrushes, the Handbook follows the important work of Collar (2004), who revised the taxonomy of, amongst other things, the long-neglected whistling-thrushes and *Zoothera* thrushes of the region. Thus the following are now recognized as full species: Javan, Sumatran and Bornean Whistling-thrushes (*Myiophonus glaucinus*, *M. castaneus* and *M. borneensis* respectively, previously all treated as one species);

Enggano Thrush *Zoothera leucolaema*, Buru Thrush *Z. dumasi*, Seram Thrush *Z. joiceyi*, Red-and-Black Thrush *Z. mendeni* (on Peleng and Taliabu, with the subspecies of the latter island, undescribed).

Despite the attempts to revise taxonomy of some families in this volume, there are still plenty of instances of taxa that require additional studies of species limits; for the Turdidae, good candidates for splitting are listed on page 529 (e.g. two subspecies of the Great Shortwing *Heinrichia calligyna* and the *floris* race of White-browed Shortwing *Brachypteryx montana*). Another taxon for further examination is the north Bornean race *leucops* of the Flavescent Bulbul *Pycnonotus flavescens*, which despite its geographic isolation and obvious morphological differences remains for the time-being as a subspecies. Races of the two species of golden bulbuls, and of the Common Scaly-thrush *Zoothera dauma*, which in the Handbook includes the montane race *horsfieldi* of Sumatra, Java, Bali, Lombok and Sumbawa, are also worthy of revision. The white-crowned forms of shamas (*stricklandii* in Kalimantan and *barbouri* of Maratua Island) are considered to be races of the White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus*. Not surprisingly, unraveling the taxonomic status of the 49 races of the Island Thrush *Turdus poliocephala* has not been attempted!

Other taxonomic decisions of note are the inclusion of two of the most enigmatic of Sulawesi's endemic birds, the Geomalia *G. heinrichi* and Sulawesi Thrush *Cataponera turdoides* (which have sometimes been treated as babblers), and the Black-breasted Fruithunter of the Bornean highlands, with the thrushes. This seems highly appropriate to me, based on my own field observations and the evidence presented in this volume. The painting of Geomalia, however, is one of the poorest in the volume; to me the species appears very much like a long-tailed *Zoothera*, whilst it is depicted in the Handbook as being very babbler-like. Finally, it is worth mentioning that Blue-wattled Bulbul *Pycnonotus nieuwenhuisii*, one of the most mysterious of Indonesia's birds, has been retained as a good species despite the suggestion that it may be a hybrid (Williams 2002).

References

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