

Book review

ALL THE BIRDS OF THE WORLD

By Josep del Hoyo (Editor)

2020. Published by Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. 968 pp, 4.8kg
 Hardback, €85 (AU\$140.00), ISBN 978-84-16728-37-4

This nearly 5 kg tome is not one that could be put together on a whim: many people are responsible and over the course of many years. The Senior Editor, Josep del Hoyo, was primarily responsible; he was also the Senior Editor of the Handbook of the Birds of the World (HBW) (del Hoyo *et al.* 1992–2013) and co-author of HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World (del Hoyo *et al.* 2014, 2016). A team of illustrators clearly play a part too. The HBW series of these volumes created by this Lynx team is well known and well regarded. This volume does as its title says and brings all the birds of the world together, including those extinct, all illustrated, in a single book. This is its primary aim, although there are the secondary aims of linking the book to digital sources and ingeniously pointing to the various reference sources of a species' taxonomic status with a simple diagram.

Beyond its modest introduction this is a volume of very few words, almost none. The vast bulk of the volume consists of species drawings, which are somewhat unevenly scattered over the pages and separated by grey lines at various angles to avoid confusion. Genus names are given in grey shaded text-boxes at some point in the species maze. Overall the book contains: a preface, an introduction, illustrations of all the birds, an index and five appendices. The illustrations take up 805 of the book's 968 pages. Overall there are 20 865 illustrations and 11 558 distribution maps. An interesting inclusion is the QR codes for each extant species.

This is a book for avian enthusiasts who like big books (embarrassingly includes me). There are many avian enthusiasts or bird-watchers in the world so the potential audience is vast. The book's most obvious strength is that it has all the birds in the one volume. I do not need to put the passerine volume down to pick up the non-passerine volume. Yet, this 'strength' comes at a price; there is no textual information on the facing pages. All the usual text information has been replaced by QR codes that link you with videos, photos and sound recordings at eBird; eBird is an appliance linked to The Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Puzzlingly you do not need the book to get there.

I find the book adds little to understanding the birds of the world; it does nothing more than your phone and the internet can do. Its functionality and educational value to professionals is limited to those that prefer to browse books rather than search online. The referencing is limited, although connecting you to eBird increases its functionality ten-fold. There is little to say about the text because there is no text — well none directly associated with the illustrations. The introduction is brief and concise, yet it has a lengthier section that gives the information needed to understand the book's features, such as the distribution maps, taxonomic circles, threatened statuses, and general layout. All the text is in English (and Latin).

Those who will benefit the most from this book are the bird-o-philos (avian enthusiasts) who must have another big-book on their bookshelf; or those without a phone or computer. The level of referencing is pertinent to non-academic users, the exception being its taxonomic circle, a diagram that points to the four foremost bird checklists: HBW and BirdLife International Checklist of the Birds of the World, version 4 (de Hoyo and Collar 2019), The eBird/Clements Checklist of Birds of the World (Clements *et al.* 2019), The Howard and Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World (Dickinson and Remsen 2013) and (Dickinson and Christidis 2014), and The IOC World Bird List (Gill *et al.* 2020). I imagine that few general readers will buy this book to make a quick comparison between these prominent sources. This seems more relevant to the avian taxonomist or systematist who are, in any case, likely to go to these sources directly.

It is difficult to criticise this book; it stands as a complete and illustrated volume of all the birds. As such it is noteworthy, but cannot be fairly compared to multi-volumed sets for not having more background text. If you want a single volume with all the illustrations that enable identification then this is the book for you. Because it provides a QR code to follow species in more detail it can perhaps be forgiven for being a picture book.

Its supplementary information included a pictorial appendix of extinct species — those extinct since 1500. Some of these illustrations are simply light-grey silhouettes, because there is presumably no reference material to reliably draw them. Those that are illustrated are detailed enough and well-drawn. This appendix certainly adds value to the volume. The cover picture is striking! It is a larger than life full-facial-view of a Philippine Eagle *Pithecophaga jefferyi* the bird on the Philippine fifty centavo coin.

I would recommend this book to those that want a very big book, with all the birds of the world, illustrated, on their bookshelf. It may also be used for sturdy coffee tables. Its QR codes make it more useful if you need a pictorial guide to access the correct web-pages on eBird with your phone.

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