

Book review

MAMMALS OF CHINA

By José Luis Copete (Compiler)

2020. Published by Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. 208 pp.
 Paperback, 25.20€, ISBN 978-84-16728-28-2

This book is taken from the Handbook of the Mammals of the World series (Wilson and Mittermeier 2009–2020), with minor modifications and updates. The compiler of this book, Mammals of China, is José Luis Copete. Dr Copete is an editor with Lynx who has research interests in the phylogenetic relationships of Oenanthe (Wheatears). The illustrators are all experienced wildlife artists led by Toni Llobet, the chief illustrator of the Illustrated Checklist of the Mammals of the World (Burgin *et al.* 2020).

This book presents an illustrated checklist of the mammals of China. It is the third in a series of illustrated checklists. Its aim is to furnish up-to-date information on the mammals occurring in the region. Like other books in this series it is not intended to be a field guide, but to simply point to the animals in the region and to give diagnostic illustrations of them, although not all diagnostic illustrations are possible with some species needing identification by checking dentition or by DNA analysis.

The framework for this checklist is the same as others in the series. Its illustrations, maps and explanatory text are on the same pages – not facing pages. This design makes it easier to navigate than those with the text and illustrations on facing pages. It has a contents, short introduction, a regional map, and then the checklist – followed by one page of references and an index. The book is dominated by the 182-page checklist, which encompasses some 663 species, but does not include the introduced or free-roaming domestic species. This book is intended for general readers or people simply wanting to complete a set of checklists. English speaking Chinese may be interested. It may also serve as a quick reference guide for academics who have a simple question to answer.

The strength of this book lies in its easy to follow layout and its high-quality illustrations. Its greatest weakness being that it does not give detailed information on where to find each species (it does have rough and simple maps) or provide the finer descriptions of species to aid their identification. Yet it does remind readers that it is not intended to be a field-guide.

I cannot see this book doing much to further the discipline of mammalogy. Since much of the information presented is taken from the Handbooks of Mammals of the World (Vols 1–9), and updated, one can assume its facts are reliable. A single page of 28 references seems too little for the mammals of China. It appears that little direct research has gone into making this book.

A single reference, ‘Zhigang *et al.* (2015)’ given in the introduction, was not included in the reference list: Zhang (1999) was included and this is possibly what the Compiler was pointing to in the introduction. Apparently, a better proofread was required. [After correspondence with the author I have ascertained that two references were viewed, a book and a later paper. The book with maps was followed, which was Jiang *et al.* 2015.] However, there is very little text to review: a single-page introduction, half a page of instructions on using the checklist (it is simple), and the species’ accounts. The species’ entries carry essential data on body length and mass, hair colour and general morphological or geographical descriptions. Some of the species-maps show ranges not in China. For example, on page 24, the Korean Hare *Lepus coreanus* is limited to North and South Korea. Its inclusion suggests it crosses the border between North Korea and China, although it seems not to be drawn across this line in the map. Of supplementary material there is a map of China and surrounds following the introduction. I found its finer print too clustered and too fine to read easily. The bold print highlighting the surrounding countries was not as critical, but was easy to read. The front and back covers have large flaps to help bookmark pages.

This book will have a limited educational role; beyond checking general descriptions, broad morphometrics and very general distributions it has little value. Nonetheless, my family and I have used it for just those purposes: e.g., checking the distribution of ‘pink dolphins’ Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphin *Sousa chinensis*. It had a more wide-spread distribution than we expected. I would recommend this book to those who want a general reference at home that is quick and easy to read. It may also be useful for libraries to help with school projects.

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