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Handbook of the Birds of the World. Volume 15: Weavers to New World Warblers

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phalarope, and having surveyed or studied the community ecology of many more species. The book is not parochial; it ranges through shorebird and wader literature and issues worldwide.

The book is arranged in rather classic "ornithological" fashion. Following a brief introduction, four chapters cover evolution, systematics, and morphology, anatomy and physiology, breeding biology, and mating systems. These are followed by five chapters covering migration, ecological relationships, and population biology. There is a chapter "Shorebirds as Predators" but less attention to the ramifications of "Shorebirds as Prey," and the indirect effects predators may exert on the behavior and population ecology of adult shorebirds. The text closes with four chapters explicitly addressing conservation, including one addressing issues involved in controlling nest predation. In addition, every chapter—even the one addressing evolution—concludes with a section "Conservation Implications." References are included after each chapter, a convenient minor publication luxury, rather than complied at the end. An appendix listing the world's recognized shorebird species, with their ranges and estimates of population sizes, completes the book's accessory materials.

Going well beyond the shorebird literature, in each chapter Colwell brings in general theories from ecology, evolution, behavior, and conservation biology but applies them to the specifics of shorebird biology. For example, the discussion of clutch size, after a perfunctory bow to Lack, appropriately ignores the huge literature considering factors affecting clutch size in altricial species and narrows the discussion to possibilities relevant to shorebirds: egg production, incubation limitation, and some limitations to care after hatching. Colwell's treatment of most topics is balanced. He is not an advocate for one position or another, and he presents most issues as open-ended discussions. In some cases he has missed relevant theory; for example, Pyle (2008) and others have argued that the diversity of patterns of first-year primary molt among migratory shorebirds relate to nonbreeding ranges ("Northern Hemisphere strategy" versus "Southern Hemisphere strategy"), bringing a useful perspective to the variety of patterns among the shorebirds.

The book contains things that one simply cannot easily find elsewhere. There is no other one-stop shopping location to learn what PRISM, WHSRN, MSS, ISS, WeBS, etc., stand for, and what are their goals. Yes, one can surf the web and learn about these, but it will be a hit-and-miss prospect in comparison to the guided tour provided by this book, which includes a table listing useful websites.

This book will motivate people to study shorebirds, but for the most part it does not tell them how to do so. It is not a practical manual of shorebird students' "tricks of the trade." It lacks a reference to Gratto-Trevor's (2004) "North American Banders' Manual for Shorebirds," available on the web, which provides a wealth of information beyond "banding" per se, including field techniques for scoring molt, aging shorebirds, locating nests, capturing birds, etc. It contains only passing references to Pyle's (2008) guide to aging and sexing, and none at all to the classic work by Prater et al. (1977). As stated in the introduction, this book had its origins with Colwell's course lectures at Humboldt State University; a hypothetical complementary "lab manual" would cover these topics, and such material appears to be already available elsewhere.

Aside from the handsome cover photo of a nonbreeding American Avocet *Recurvirostra americana* taking flight, reflected in the water below, there is no color printing. Although color could have dressed up the book, given the widespread availability of photos on line, I applaud the decision to avoid a higher price by sticking with black and white. The book does contain the obligatory picture of a newly hatched plover chick, albeit in this case one of a Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) rather than of a Piping (*C. melodus*) or a Snowy (*C. alexandrinus*) Plover. The book is available in hardcover, in Adobe Reader format for those of you who prefer squinting at your smartphone or tablet, and as a Kindle edition, where a lack of color printing remains irrelevant.

Given the widespread and ready access to information we all now have at our fingertips, one wonders about the future value of texts such as this. The experience I describe at the start of this review dispels the thought in this case. Colwell has distilled a huge literature into one document that will be of enduring value for the current generation of shorebird and wader researchers, managers, and enthusiasts.—DAVID B. LANK, Centre for Wildlife Ecology and Evolutionary Department of Biological Sciences, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC V5A 1S6, Canada. E-mail: dlank@sfu.ca.

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This volume is one of a series dedicated to assembling information on birds of the world. A motivational force in this effort was the desire and need to assess all birds' conservation statuses, review the pressures reflecting on their statuses, and serve as an informational foundation for how threats can be addressed. The series goes well beyond these underlying goals.

This volume begins with a foreword addressing broadly the general conservation issues facing birds across the globe, then proceeds to the accounts for eight families (Ploecidae, Viduidae, Estrildidae, Vireonidae, Fringillidae, Drepanididae, Peucedramidae, and Parulidae) and individual accounts of their

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component species. The family accounts cover systematics, morphological aspects, habitat, general habits, voice, food and feeding, breeding, movements, relationship with man, status and conservation, and a general bibliography. The species accounts address most of these topics, size and weight statistics, and plumage description to the subspecific level as needed. Inset range maps are also included. The species accounts are accompanied by color plates depicting each species; the volume also is heavily illustrated with an array of high-quality photographs.

The foreword in each volume of the *Handbook of Birds of the World* consists of a discourse covering a specific topic. In this volume, it is a general treatment of the issues and threats facing birds across the globe. In this regard, it is not closely linked to the rest of the volume. However, it provides a broad, albeit disheartening, perspective on these issues, along with a motivational optimism and hope for dealing with them. Many figures, charts, and statistics detail and summarize the various dimensions of trends at the levels of taxon, land use, resource use, climate, and conservation response. The style and approach to presentation here, as throughout the volume, is to omit citations, thus more freely incorporating the authors' interpretational perspectives at times. However, to say the least, it is a laudable and conceptually comprehensive summary of these topics.

Each family account has its own author, completing a general outline for their respective family(ies). Within this outline, the authors were clearly given the flexibility of expression. Some chose a more colorful, some a more straightforward, approach. Nonetheless, all the family accounts are well written (and edited), inspired reading, and a clear asset of the volume.

The sections on systematics consist of detailed histories reflecting the development and, perhaps, vacillation on the family's taxonomy to the present. They are nonjudgmental, reflecting the types of analyses for each assertion, and treat the topic inclusively. Thus these accounts could serve easily as a comprehensive reference for anyone interested in the systematics of these groups.

Topics within other sections also disclose an underlying design of comprehensive overview. For each family, the account presents many dimensions of its species' biology (morphology, migration, social structure, breeding, etc.). Some special, even anomalous, cases or significant studies are given their own paragraph. The specialized summaries of status and conservation are an asset of this volume in particular.

Each page of the family accounts features photographs of that group. The pictures not only add to the volume's attractiveness, but most were selected to depict special aspects of the biology of the family, or specific species within the family. The captions disclose, many times in detail, special attributes, behaviors, conditions, and ecological and taxonomic relationships. There also appears to be some focus given to presenting images of less well-known species, or species of special concern, with small populations. For example, there is a series of photographs of the Noronha Vireo (*Vireo gracilirostris*), a species depicted in few other works.

The species accounts are the most technically oriented aspects of the volume. They incorporate a more traditional treatment of each species, with various statistics, details of appearance, and subspecific distinctions, among other topics, in a standard format for each species. Each contains its own bibliography. The range maps for each species are restricted (by the organizer's design) to the species' natural range, excluding areas where it may have been introduced (with rare exceptions; e.g., in this volume, the House Finch [*Carpodacus mexicanus*]). The mapmakers apparently took some pains to outline these ranges as accurately as possible, even separating outlier populations where appropriate.

The color plates accompanying the species accounts show adults of each species in breeding plumage. Although these were painted by six artists, the format of the plates is remarkably uniform and crisp. The plates precede the accounts for the corresponding species, making reference convenient. Trailing out the volume is an extensive bibliography and index of scientific and common names.

Any examination of even a small part of this volume brings one to appreciate several things. First is the astounding level of information and detail incorporated into even a single volume; next is the high level of thought, planning, and organization that went into this series, from the structure of the text, the consistency of presentation among the components, the relation of family and species accounts, the selection of photographs, their physical presentation, their captions highlighting concept and information, and the format and content of the plates, all structured and planned down to the smallest details. The small font in the species accounts may challenge some, but I found it still readable in modest light.

A volume of this size is expected to have flaws and compromises (the latter not necessarily a basis for criticism). Compared to parallel attempts, this volume is much less technically detailed than the *Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa*. The lack of direct referencing obscures the sources of information for details in the text (although this avoids some distraction); interpretation might be the author's opinion alone rather than inclusive of alternative hypotheses. The sources apparently included white papers, particularly for information on population and conservation status. These can open the door to unrefereed and uncritical data, even when referenced accurately. For example (p. 411), the figure of 256–525 pairs as a 1987 population estimate for the Black-capped Vireo (*Vireo atricapilla*) is misleading, as it was really just a tally of observational counts rather than an actual estimate of the population. There is no subject index, although the text is already well organized. The range maps are small, distractingly so for cosmopolitan species. While these maps are remarkably consistent with my expectations for areas and species with which I am familiar, they are less informational where one has to interpret ranges of unfamiliar species. Except in the foreword and for characterizing subfamilies, there are few summary figures and tables that might have more handily summarized patterns. Where the text lists an array of subspecies, the plates show only a few representative subspecies. Only breeding adults are depicted—so the coverage was not meant as a comprehensive reference on plumages.

In examining the plates, I found a subtle starkness to the representations on some, not to denigrate the accuracy in detail. Plates 29 and 30, for example, may overemphasize the gray tones relative to the yellow and have darkened the tones in general. There are some issues of proportion on Plate 45—the Pine Grosbeaks (*Pinicola enucleator*) look small, and the Red Crossbills (*Loxia curvirostra*) look too much like just rosefinches with crossed bill tips. The plates for parulid warblers are better, although the Pine Warbler (*Dendroica pinus*) looks too dark, the buff tones on the underparts of the Northern Waterthrush (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) perhaps not enhanced enough. In most cases, however, the plates appear very professionally done and presented with the same level of concern for detail applied to the volume in general.

The trivial inconsistencies above excepted, the remaining 99%+ of this volume remains not only exceptional but

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outstanding. This series, much less this volume alone, is clearly a must for any library wanting a comprehensive reference on birds of the world. This volume should be a valuable resource for researchers, amateur and professional, and conservation biologists explicitly interested in the groups covered. It should broaden the perspective and greatly enhance the design and interpretation of any level of study or data assessment. It provides a format for rapid assimilation of broad perspectives on the biology of species of interest. And it certainly has capacity as a motivational tool to inspire the conservation of those species many of us hold dear. The presentation of the family accounts themselves inspires their own reading. This is a job very, very well done.—JOSEPH A. GRZYBOWSKI, College of Mathematics and Science, University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, OK 73034, and Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural Science, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK 73072. E-mail: j_grzybowski@sbcglobal.net.

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