



## The Ornithologist's Dictionary

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**The Ornithologist's Dictionary.**—Johannes Erritoze, Kaj Kampp, Kevin Winker, and Clifford B. Frith. 2007. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, Spain. 290 pp. ISBN 84-96553-43-4. \$25.00 (paper).

In writing this book, the authors endeavor to provide a tool that makes the language of ornithology accessible not only to the novice birdwatcher, but also to serious students. Terminology defined within this dictionary ranges from the names of common birding groups (e.g., American Birding Association), professional organizations (e.g., Cooper Ornithological Society), and important ornithological resources (e.g., many professional journals and lay publications) as well as important words associated with specific areas of avian biology (e.g., anatomy, physiology, genetics, ecology, and behavior). Like any dictionary, this book will be helpful only in defining words identified from other sources, making it a supplementary learning tool.

The purpose of this book is not to teach terminology, but rather to provide a learning aid that offers definitions to terms encountered while studying a variety of sources of ornithological information. Thus the dictionary could be a useful supplement to texts such as that of Gill (2007), that lack a glossary. The authors have kept the number of terms in the book manageable by limiting the inclusion of large groups of highly technical terms for which other publications exist (e.g., avian anatomy) and words that can easily be found in a standard dictionary. Nevertheless, over 5000 words and terms are defined in the book. Term definitions are generally concise, accurate, and written with a broad audience in mind. Words associated with scientific topics, appropriately, have more technical definitions.

A really useful feature of this book is the inclusion of definitions for Greek and Latin root words. These roots are then typically followed alphabetically by multiple words that include a prefix derived from that root, providing helpful examples of how the root is used. When teaching students in my ornithology course, I constantly encourage the learning of Greek and Latin roots as a doorway to sorting out the meaning of unfamiliar terms. I am pleased to see that such an approach is reinforced in this book. Another useful feature of this book is the inclusion of short descriptions of ornithological organizations and resources. This adds depth to the book beyond a standard dictionary. However, the appearance of organizations and resources in a purely alphabetical listing will require the reader to know of the organization or resource beforehand for the book to be useful.

While this book is an excellent ornithological dictionary, I believe a few small changes could improve the broad appeal intended by the authors. It might be better to place ornithological organizations and resources in separate sections (as was done with bird families of the world) that could easily be perused by the novice reader who is looking for such information. This would be a simple reorganization that would allow this book to be a more primary information source for nonprofessionals. Additionally, it would be helpful to consistently identify the specific

target group serviced by each organization. For example, The American Ornithologists' Union is identified as a "scientific society," while the Cooper and Wilson Ornithological societies are each identified as an "American society," when in fact, each organization caters to professional ornithologists. Such a discrepancy would be confusing to the nonspecialist audience. Finally, I am uncertain as to how useful the taxonomic listing at the end of the book will be to novice readers. The list is comprised of family names, English names of bird groups contained within families, and approximate number of species in each family. However, if a reader who is not already familiar with bird families encounters the word "hornbill," nothing more can be learned beyond the fact that hornbills are in the family Bucerotidae and that there are about 49 species. Including a simple description of general bird groups, such as those found in the glossary of Podulka et al. (2004), either in the taxonomic list or in the dictionary section would be valuable to many readers.

There are a couple omissions that I hope the authors will consider addressing in future editions. First, the inclusion of important ornithological resources is a valuable feature of this book. However, some key resources are not included. For example, *Birds of North America* (at <<http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/>>), a key natural history publication that can be used by ornithologists of all levels, is left out. The issue here might be that the authors have focused on periodical publications, but the inclusion of other major resources that will have value for many years should be considered. Second, since the authors opted to include key historical scientists such as Darwin and Linnaeus, I am curious as to why important historical ornithologists were omitted. Figures such as Audubon and Wilson, who have been repeatedly honored by the ornithological community, should merit inclusion if the authors deem the defining of people of historical note important.

While I believe that this book needs a little reorganization before the full range of ornithological terminology can be completely accessible to novices, as intended by the authors, it is still an excellent tool for facilitating the study of ornithological texts in that it offers concise, appropriate definitions to a broad range of ornithological terms that meet the needs of those new to the field as well as professionals. Its small size makes it portable so that it is easily carried, even in the field. Thus, undergraduate students taking courses in ornithology or anyone having the need to read ornithological journals can carry it with them to provide instant access to definitions of ornithology-specific terms.—DONALD R. POWERS, Biology Department, George Fox University, Newberg, OR 97132. E-mail: [dpowers@georgefox.edu](mailto:dpowers@georgefox.edu)

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