

## Book reviews

### Revised summary on European birds

Bauer, H.-G., Bezzel, E. & Fiedler, W. (eds.) 2005: Das Kompendium der Vögel Mitteleuropas. 1–3 (2. vollständig überarbeitete Auflage). 337+808+622 pp. – AULA-Verlag, Wiebelsheim. ISBN 3-89104-696-0.

This three-volume set is the second, totally revised edition of the first edition with the same title (two volumes, from 1985 and 1993). The first volume includes non-passerines, the second passerines, and the third volume literature and additional information. *Kompendium* summarizes and up-dates the contents of *Handbuch der Vögel Mitteleuropas*, the German masterwork on European birds edited by Urs N. Glutz von Blotzheim from the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s. The book is also partly based on a very thorough German compilation on the status of Central European birds, *Die Brutvögel Mitteleuropas – Bestand und Gefährdung*, by Kurt Bauer and Peter Berthold. As knowledge on European birds increases rapidly all the time, a new edition by renowned specialists is most welcome and useful for all ornithologists, also outside Central Europe.

*Kompendium* includes all bird species recorded in Europe, including stragglers from other parts of the world. Taxonomy follows the newest, generally accepted views.

Species accounts are typically 3–4 pages long for a common species, and 2–3 pages for rarer ones, filled with text and numerical data. The information is presented under the following titles: name in English, French and Spanish, taxonomy, references to field identification (including published photos), measurements, status, distribution and populations, movements, population changes, densities, threats, conservation measures, habitat, food, voice, behaviour, breeding biology, eggs, mortality and age, and moult. The text is written in an effective, concise way, detailed enough for most purposes of a general reader. If a bird-

watcher or a professional ornithologist, especially those interested in certain species, want to obtain an up-dated review which gives basic data and references for further reading for every kind of problems on European birds, *Kompendium* is the best choice at the moment. In particular, it presents and up-dates a great number of numerical data from thousands of recent studies, referenced in a proper way.

Modern information on populations, changes of pair numbers and ranges, and on threats and conservation are most welcome. Behaviour, migration, breeding biology etc. have been reviewed shortly, but new information is given also on these topics if available. Lengthy and more detailed descriptions can be found in *Handbuch* and other major handbooks.

All distribution maps have been re-written for this work, showing, in three colours, the range both during and outside the breeding season (maps show the Western Palearctic, reaching Sahara in the south). For species breeding in Central Europe, a table shows the size of national populations, as well as recent changes in the breeding range and number of pairs. No other graphs are presented, although they would have helped better to understand and compare, for example, population trends.

The third volume lists all references (4235 in total!) used for the species accounts in the first and second volume. At the same time, in addition to best-known English works, the reader gets an idea of the variety and volume of German ornithological research. In addition, this third part includes a thorough glossary of ornithological terms, a catalogue of species names in all Central European languages, and an index of species and other taxonomic units. The third volume gives also information on Red Lists and bird conservation conventions of the European birds.

*Kompendium* is a very useful and thorough compilation of up-dated research results on European birds. I recommend it highly. *Kompendium*,

the original *Handbuch*, and other German books represent top-quality literature, and hopefully motivate many to learn at least elementary German. However, it should be noted that species accounts have been formulated in a standard manner, and that much of the data can therefore be understood without proper mastering of the language.

**Pertti Koskimies**

## Birds of Moscow

Kalyakin, M.V. & Voltzit, O.V. 2006: Atlas. Birds of Moscow City and the Moscow Region. – Pensoft, Sofia-Moscow, 272 pp. ISBN-10: 954-642-262-2; ISBN-13: 978-954-642-262-0. 58 €.

*Birds of Moscow city and the Moscow Region* is a good example what professional ornithologists and birdwatcher can do together. During 1999–2004, a total of 401 participants have inventoried breeding and wintering bird species from Moscow area covering about 47,000 km<sup>2</sup>. In addition, also spring and autumn times are partly covered. The Zoological Museum of Moscow State University has coordinated the work. The atlas is a complete collection of distribution maps of all 273 breeding, migrant, nomadic and wintering bird species recorded in Moscow City and Moscow Region. The book compiles records from 336 locations from Moscow City and 750 locations from the Moscow Region. The cover of the data is almost complete, especially from the Moscow City area. Unfortunately, the book does not give any maps about the survey activity or habitat types of the study area. Therefore, evaluation of the factors affecting presence or the absence of species is limited. The spatial cover of winter data is not equally good as that of the breeding data. No data about the abundances of species are given. A special Faunistic Committee has verified observations of species with identification problems and evaluated the breeding status.

Birds of Moscow City and Moscow Region give normally one page for all 273 observed species. The page layout (page size 30 cm × 20 cm) consists of several photographs of species (1–5 photos per species), maps showing species distribution both in Moscow City as well as Moscow Region. Colour-coded bars show the seasonal

presence of the species in the region and a short (normally only 6 lines) description of species status is provided both in Russian and in English. Possible differences in status between the City and the Region are indicated as well in seasonal occurrence. Normally bird photos covered more than half the page. Therefore, the book is more than a bird atlas. The book consist about 900 photos taken by 54 photographers! The large amount of photos is both a weakness as well as a good thing for the book. For scientists, photos take pages from evaluation of the huge amount of data collected, for birdwatchers and ordinary readers photos are perhaps the most interesting part of the book.

Distribution maps show the actual location of observation, not the square where the species has been registered. By using different symbols, the maps separate winter records, locations where breeding were evident, locations where breeding were possible and places where birds were only observed during spring, summer and autumn. In some cases, the text helps to determine, if the species is observed only occasionally or if it is regular winter species in the area. The small scale of the maps means that a dot indicate confirmed breeding within a circle with 0.7 km diameter in the city of Moscow and 3.5 km diameter in the Moscow Region.

As about 8.3 million people are living in the Moscow City area and about 6.6 million people in Moscow Region, the book must therefore be considered partly as an urban bird atlas. According to my own calculation, breeding of 104 bird species was confirmed in the Moscow City area. The species list of the city area include, for example, three owl and six woodpecker species. This indicates a quite high quality habitat within a large-sized city like Moscow. Corvids are common in Moscow, breeding of *Corvus corone cornix* was confirmed in 100 locations, and even *Corvus corax* in 22 locations. Some species, like *Larus argentatus*, *Columba palumbus*, *Streptopelia decaocto* and *Phoenicurus ochruros*, occurring in other towns in Europe were not breeding Moscow City. *Accipiter gentilis* was breeding in 15 locations, indicating good food resources also for birds of prey in the city area!

In my copy of the book, there were some problems with the page numbering and order of species presentation. Page 48 was followed by pages 65–

80, and then by pages 49–64, after which the page numbering continued normally. I was surprised by the very small number of star symbols for ‘probable breeding’ in the distribution maps, because almost all red-stars were ‘evident breeding’ symbols, whereas the text speaks about confirmed breedings? At the end of the book, there is list of used literature, 37 pages information about the photos and species index in Russia, Latin and English. Perhaps more pages for the evaluation of the results instead of photos and their explanations are a better way to present results for the scientists. But as I pointed out earlier, this book is more than an ordinary atlas book. I would especially recommend it for urban ecologists and people who like to see colourful bird photos.

**Jukka Jokimäki**

### **A handbook of amazing quality**

del Hoyo, J., Elliott A. & Christie, D.A. (eds.) 2005: Handbook of the birds of the world. Vol. 10. Cuckoo-shrikes to Thrushes. – Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. 896 pp.

The 10<sup>th</sup> volume of the HBW continues the superb quality of its predecessors, with 81 colour plates, 427 photographs, 737 distribution maps, and more than 6,000 bibliographical references. The HBW has not only become the most thorough and up-to-date review of all the bird species in the world, but in addition, this masterwork sets standards to all ornithological handbooks. When HBW started to appear, there were many ornithologists doubting the huge task the Spanish colleagues had taken. Time has shown that they knew absolutely well what will be ahead. The extremely high quality of the work, the huge amount of information by an international team of experts, thorough search for references, lucid style of writing, marvellous photographs and plates, professional editing, and, last but not least, all this within a surprising time-table. A new volume appears now every year, and it has taken only 13 years to publish 10 volumes, 50 cm in my bookshelf!

Volume 10 follows the good standard of previous ones, with a volume-specific foreword written by world experts of a topic (23 pp.), introduction to this volume (4 pp.), family and species ac-

counts (770 pp.), and reference list (66 pp.), plus index. The foreword reviews the ecology and impact of non-indigenous birds, by Daniel Sol *et al.* They begin that “The introduction of plants and animals facilitated by human activities has been so common and widespread a phenomenon that alien species are currently recognized as a central element of global environmental change”. About 400 bird species have been included in over 1,900 documented introduction attempts. The article discusses thoroughly, with a few informative graphs, e.g. the choice of species selected for introduction, the factors determining success of establishment, as well as the population, genetic, community and other effects by alien species, including significant economic and health problems to human societies. This theme fits very well to the timely discussion of various threats to global biodiversity.

The passerine families included in this volume are the following: cuckoo-shrikes (*Campephagidae*), bulbuls (*Pycnonotidae*), leafbirds (*Chloropseidae*), fairy-bluebirds (*Irenidae*), ioras (*Aeginthidae*), silky-flycatchers (*Ptilogonatidae*), waxwings (*Bombycillidae*), hypocolius (*Hypocoliidae*), palmchat (*Dulidae*), dippers (*Cinclidae*), wrens (*Troglodytidae*), mockingbirds and thrashers (*Mimidae*), accentors (*Prunellidae*), and thrushes (*Turdidae*), the last of them and the biggest one, covering 300 pages. The introductory texts for the families are absolutely the best and most detailed at hands, and very easy to use and compare thanks to their concise and systematic structure.

I have used them many times successfully when writing texts of families, and I find very much new to me also of families which I think to be familiar with. They cover fully systematics, morphological aspects, habitat, general habits, voice, food and feeding, breeding, movements, relationship with Man, status and conservation, and general bibliography. The family description of *Turdidae*, for example, has 106 pages (31x24 cm)! Text is illustrated by plenty of extremely fine and well-choosed photographs showing especially various behavioural traits, added with long and informative legends. One can spend hours just by looking for photos and reading the informative captions.

Every species is described with long and detailed text under the following headings: taxon-

omy, subspecies and distribution, descriptive notes, habitat, food and feeding, breeding, movements, status and conservation, and bibliography. The text is usually half to one page long, depending on the rarity of the species and amount of knowledge, and it is accompanied by a range map. Also here, systematic writing makes it easy to compare species with each other, just as hoped by a researcher or layman of a good handbook. French, German and Spanish names are given. As far as I can see, especially from Finnish literature, references are generally well balanced. The plates of all the species have been drawn by the leading artists in every volume, in this one by more than ten. They include usually one or several genus, but *Turdus* has been divided to more than eight plates. The plates represent the best ornithological artwork of our time.

HBW belongs to the best handbooks ever published in zoology, and thinking of the ambitious aim to cover all known bird species and families in so detailed manner, and including up-to-date information from the most relevant references by the best experts. It is published in a user-friendly way with top quality illustrations. There is very little to blame after seeing already ten volumes of such a masterpiece. Of course, one can always find some

minor bettering for every book ever published. To say just one of a few I can imagine in a book of this scale. The compilers rely very much on text. I think several kind of information could be collected in tables and graphs, to be even better comparable and readable, and especially, at a single glance be more readily raising new ideas and solutions to problems in a readers head. HBW is a little old-fashioned in this respect.

HBW is also presenting the ornithofauna of the Earth species by species, giving no possibilities to view it from other points (e.g. geographical areas, biomes, habitats). However, everything cannot be included, and if one will produce a DVD or CD-ROM on the material, in a way of the BWPi (*Birds of the Western palearctic interactive*), such kind of comparisons can be made. Perhaps the editors of the HBW will produce some types of summaries on their information of the global bird fauna in the 2010s, after the last (16<sup>th</sup>) volume of HBW will be published in 2011, according to the extremely rapid schedule of one volume per year.

Congratulations to the editors, authors, artists, photographers, publishers and all thousands of people having made it possible to cover the birds of the world in so beautiful and top-quality way.

**Pertti Koskimies**