

Book review

Urbanization of birds in Europe

Kelcey, J.G. & Rheinwald, G. 2005: *Birds in European Cities*. GINSTER Verlag, St. Katharinen, Germany, 452 pp. (ISBN 3-9806817-2-6). Price 29.50 €

In *Birds in European Cities*, 24 authors describe the history and the present state of urban avifauna of 16 cities across Europe (Berlin, Bonn, Bratislava, Brussels, Florence, Hamburg, Lisbon, Lublin, Moscow, Prague, Rome, Sofia, St. Petersburg, Valência, Vienna and Warsaw). Urban habitats have attracted attention from only a few ornithologist or scientists, despite these habitats offering great possibilities to study, for example, the effects of climate change or human disturbance on animals or plants. This book describes the state and, importantly, the history of the urban bird communities in main European cities. It thus forms a good complement to a recent book on this topic (Marzluff *et al.* 2001: *Avian Ecology and Conservation in an Urbanizing World*, Kluwer Academic Publishers) which was quite New World orientated. *Birds in European Cities* is very important, because it gathers information on urbanization of birds in the Old World. Unfortunately, there is no information included from Scandinavian countries or British islands at all, nor does it contain data from Russian towns other than Moscow or St. Petersburg. I hope that information of new urban bird atlases from Helsinki, Lahti or Oulu and from other cities in Europe might be included in the next edition of the present book.

Birds in European Cities includes an introduction section (including a chapter on birds and their urban environments), special chapters of individual towns and a concluding chapter, as well as appendices of summary of the breeding birds listed in the individual chapters and indexes of scientific and English bird names. The chapters of individual cities are structured into sections on: “History

of development of the town”, “Natural history of birds in the town (avifauna before 1940s, avifauna 1940–1990, avifauna after 1990)”, “Changes of breeding bird fauna in different habitats”, “Conclusions”, “Where to watch birds”, and “List of species recorded in the city”. The status of birds is presented separately for different habitats as well as for different seasons. It was interesting to read information about bird communities in cities with millions of people and to try to extrapolate the info for my new hometown with 60,000 inhabitants. Personally, I found the information on birds observed during the migration period not useful, whereas I was very happy that the book separates the breeding and wintering bird communities. In some cases, the authors of subchapters give also information on alien species observed in their study towns as well as data on species of special interests (anecdotes). I found it very interesting to read these chapters, as well as the historical development of the cities and their bird communities, although the history sometimes include some topics not dealing with birds at all. The stories about the House Sparrows, Peregrines, Kestrels and Magpies were almost the same all over Europe. Sparrows have decreased all over Europe, whereas Peregrines and Kestrels have found new niches in towns.

I hope that these interesting observations will increase the interests of ecologists to study urban habitats more. There currently are too few studies on the adaptation and behavioural changes of birds to recent urbanization. In this sense, *Birds in European Cities* makes it clear that alien species (especially Parrots) are successful colonists in southern European towns. Therefore, urban environments provide excellent opportunities to study behavioural changes of bird on human-changed environments. For scientists, the use of alphabetic ordered species list in the appendices was a poor choice and I hope that forthcoming editions of book change this and cover Europe in more detail. The

introduction and the conclusion of the book need to be more scientific. Some of the paragraphs of the book contain good bibliographic references, but in other paragraphs and in the introduction and conclusion of the book the references are not so good. This book is a very welcome addition providing new information about the nature of urban

landscapes in the Old World and the adaptation of birds to the urban environment. I hope that this book will give new ideas for studies about the adaptations of birds on human-changed environments.

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