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## Reviews — Revues

**Handbook of the Birds of the World, vol. 7, Jacamars to Woodpeckers**, by J. del Hoyo, A. Elliott & J. Sargatal (eds), 2002. Lynx, Barcelona. ISBN 84-87334-37-7, hardback, €145. Available from Lynx Edicions, [www.hbw.com](http://www.hbw.com).

The introductory essay in this latest excellent volume of HBW is on recently extinct birds, by Errol Fuller. I found this chapter fascinating but, compared with the rest of the book, it is rather poorly written and could have done with stricter copy-editing to bring the style more into line (and up to the literary standard of) the rest of the book. Aside from its verbosity, I found it tantalising in reviewing the subject rather superficially — with a more concise style, more information could have been included in the same space.

There the real criticism ends! This is the last of the non-passerine volumes in the series and, as a bonus, included with this volume comes a plastic laminated, illustrated group index card, indicating in which volume each non-passerine bird group falls. At last, the species descriptions have a voice section, rather than, as in previous volumes, leaving the family introduction sections to deal with voice. However, two minor irritations remain: the family sections are still not clearly referenced, and the maps have too few reference points. It would be helpful if maps were to show country boundaries, especially to help determine the geographical limits of closely related species, which appear on different maps: it is currently almost impossible to determine whether such species are allopatric, parapatric or in part sympatric.

There is also a good discussion of taxonomic problems for most groups, especially woodpeckers, whose taxonomic section reads as an excellent guide to potential research projects! Woodpeckers make up almost half of this volume, while the chapter on honeyguides is very short, reflecting lack of knowledge as much as lack of species. Barbets are classed as a single family separate from the toucans, although the authors admit that toucans are derived from, and form a sister group to, the Neotropical barbets, with this clade being the sister-group of old world barbets. However, the fact that the latter are probably not a monophyletic group leads the authors back, for simplicity and practicality, to treating all barbets as one family and the morphologically different and uniform toucans as another. One practical advantage of this is that it makes the family sections less repetitive than would have been the case with multiple barbet families.

As usual, the family sections are illustrated with high quality photographs, although it becomes evident that, in the present volume, many of the species are so poorly known that photography manages to illustrate a relatively small proportion compared with, for instance, volume 6 (see *Malimbus* 24: 44–45). The family sections

are generally well written and uniform in style, with a relatively small number of authors having contributed to this volume.

The plates are mostly up to the usual high standard of HBW, although the colours are occasionally rather washed out, e.g. Plate 7, where the Green Barbet *Stactolaema olivacea* is not green enough and the Yellow-throated Tinker *Pogoniulus s. subsulphureus* is depicted with just a trace of cream on the throat and supercilium instead of the intense yellow it shows in life. It is sometimes a little difficult to assign the birds on a plate to the correct species, as usually only one reference number is given for each species: where there are many subspecies, these can sometimes appear closer to the wrong species' number. Either the numbers need to be better placed or the subspecies better grouped, or dividing lines added.

Anyway, these are comparatively minor points, and as has become usual in reviews of HBW, I end by congratulating once again the authors, photographers, artists and editors on a wonderful achievement.

Alan Tye

**Field Guide to the Birds of East Africa**, by T. Stevenson & J. Fanshawe, 2002. 602 pp. including 570 col. plates, many maps. T. & A.D. Poyser, London. ISBN 0-85661-079-8, hardback, £29.95.

Two important African regional guides have appeared so far this year. One, *Birds of Western Africa* (by Borrow & Demey, Christopher Helm, London), was reviewed in the last issue of *Malimbus* (24: 45–47). This, the other, might at first sight appear out of the geographical area of interest of this journal but, in addition to Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, the book also includes Rwanda and Burundi, which we include in our Society's range. It also includes a surprisingly high proportion of what are normally considered strictly W African birds, owing to the fact that many of the latter extend just into E Africa in Uganda, especially in the Semliki Valley.

There are many differences between the two books mentioned. The price of the present work is 55% that of Borrow & Demey and, with 25% fewer pages than Borrow & Demey's 832, and a smaller, typical field-guide page size, this book weighs about half the W African guide, despite the fact that it includes 1388 species, 80% of all the birds that occur in sub-Saharan Africa, and over 100 species more than Borrow & Demey. It will thus be much more handy for field use. The high-quality glossy paper is similar in both books, and space and weight have here been saved in several other ways. First, the introductory sections are reduced to a minimum (14 pages). Second not all subspecies are described and relatively few are illustrated; instead, the text (and to a lesser extent the plates) discusses all races considered "important or distinctive". This is probably acceptable for a field guide, since full