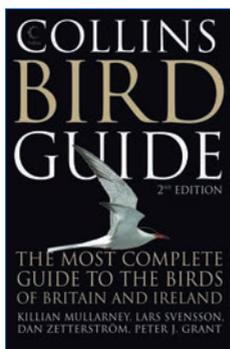


Reviews



Collins Bird Guide 2nd edition

By Lars Svensson, Killian Mullarney and Dan Zetterström
Collins, 2009

448pp, over 3,500 colour illustrations, maps

Pbk, ISBN 978-0-00-726814-6 Subbuteo code M17550

£17.99 **BB Bookshop price £15.99**

Hbk, ISBN 978-0-00-726726-2 Subbuteo code M16237

£25.00 **BB Bookshop price £22.00**

No fewer than 700,000 copies of the first edition were sold, almost a third of them in the UK, and the Collins Guide has been indisputably *the* European field guide to birds for a decade now. Does this revised edition give it the wherewithal to maintain that position?

Superficially, the new guide is very similar to the old one. The dimensions are unchanged but the number of pages has increased by 12%. The main accounts contain 41 new species (33 of which are the result of taxonomic splits, and most of these receive significantly fuller treatment); many subspecies receive new or more extensive coverage; there are 14 new (double-page) spreads (perhaps most notably Larry McQueen's unloved American passerines have gone); and in total some 60 plates have been redesigned or repainted. All the maps have been revised, and the texts revisited and improved where appropriate. In the appendices, both vagrants and introduced species benefit from one extra spread.

The taxonomy now gives us wildfowl and gamebirds at the beginning, although not the all-new passerine order that the BOU embraced at the start of 2010 (though it is hinted that this is likely to follow in a future edition).

On the whole, after comparing the old and the new page by page, and pondering the logistical challenges of updating an existing layout rather than dismantling and starting from scratch, I felt that the improvement was significant. Most, if not all, of the splits and subspecies that were beginning to look like glaring omissions from the old one are covered. Taking the warblers as a case study, we now have full treatment of Eastern *Sylvia crassirostris* and Western Orphee *S. hortensis*, Asian *S. nana* and African Desert *S. deserti*, Booted *Hippolais caligata* and Syke's *H. rama*, Eastern *H. pallida* and Western Olivaceous *H. opaca*, Eastern *Phylloscopus orientalis* and Western Bonelli's Warblers

P. bonelli, plus an entire spread devoted to chiffchaffs of one sort or another and redrawn plates of Radde's *P. schwarzi* and Dusky Warblers *P. fuscatus*. The fact that there is (for example) no Moltoni's (Subalpine) Warbler *S. cantillans moltonii* while Eastern Crowned Warbler *P. coronatus* is still listed in an appendix and (still) without an illustration means that it is not yet the last word on either subspecies or vagrants – but you have to stop somewhere.

The names in the first edition were a little quirky, and they still are. For example, although *Stercorarius parasiticus* is now Arctic (not Parasitic) Skua, and *Calcarius lapponicus* has reverted to Lapland Bunting, the divers *Gavia* are still loons and the wheatears *Oenanthe* will give you a headache. Although the call transcriptions are generally excellent, the Swedish influence on some (the flight call of Redwing *Turdus iliacus* remains 'stüüüf') is not so helpful for non-Scandinavians.

As Killian Mullarney has pointed out elsewhere (*Birdwatch* 213: 30–32), perhaps the great travesty of this update was that, just four months before the publisher's deadline, the number of new pages available suddenly jumped from 24 to 48; at that late stage, much of that precious allocation ended up being used to expand the index, an inexplicable lack of foresight that reflects badly on the publisher. Bearing in mind the guidelines that the author and the artists were working with until this late stage, I think one has to conclude that the improvements in the new version are impressive.

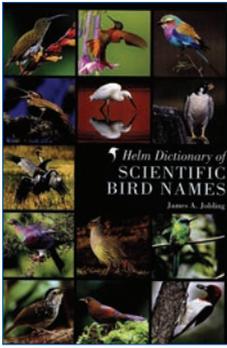
Is it still the number-one field guide to the birds of the region? Unquestionably, yes. Is it worth upgrading your old one? Yes, on the whole I think it is, and here at least the publisher should be complemented in releasing the paperback version almost as soon as the hardback (which surely few people will buy). The more user-friendly paperback is well worth the relatively modest investment.

Roger Riddington

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Helm Dictionary of Scientific Bird Names

By James A. Jobling

Christopher Helm, 2010

Hbk, 400pp

ISBN 978-1-4081-2501-4 Subbuteo code M02538

£40.00 **BB Bookshop price £35.00**

The first version of this book was published by OUP in 1991, and this is the turbocharged V8 model: bigger, heavier and more powerful. The only thing missing from the first book is the artwork decorating the vacant spaces at the end of each 'chapter'. Since then, a lot of water has flowed under many taxonomic bridges, with the fragmentation of large genera into smaller units and the promotion of several hundred subspecies to species, providing much new material for the author. There are now over 20,000 entries compared with 8,500 in the 1991 version.

Following a page of acknowledgments, a glossary and a list of abbreviations, a ten-page 'Introduction' includes the rationale for the new book, a brief history of the binomial system and a short summary of the main rules of the ICZN, and an analysis of the main types of bird names. Then follows seven pages of 'How to use the dictionary', which explains the conventions used. The author admits to a limited treatment of eponyms, giving just the basic who, when and occupation, and readers are directed elsewhere for more complete biographies.

The meat of the book consists of 483 double-column pages (a 48% increase) of dictionary-like entries with generic names (initial capital) and specific names in alphabetical order explaining the derivation and meaning, with around 25–60 entries per page. The new publisher has made more efficient use of space with a smaller, but still readable, font and closer line spacing. Many entries have been expanded by the addition of who used it, the bird or group to which it applies and

the addition of synonyms. The entry for some more frequently used words has been expanded from a few lines to almost a column. The expanded bibliography now runs to 18 pages. There cannot be that many with sources as diverse as the works of Aristotle, Pliny and a Malay-English dictionary!

In the Introduction to the earlier book, but not the present one, the author mentioned that the abolition of diacritical marks by the ICZN deprived people of a possible clue to pronunciation; the same wording now appears under the entry for *aedon*, but has a much wider application. The adjacent initial vowels in this word, and some others with a similar spelling, should be pronounced separately: ay-ee-don. As few people are now encountering classics in their education, a more general guide to pronunciation would have been helpful. I have heard *cisticola* pronounced as sis-TIK-olē and sisti-Kœ-lē. As the book tells us, the word is derived from Greek *kistos*, a shrub, and Latin *colere*, to dwell, so perhaps the initial 'c' should be hard.

As an aid to use, each page is thumbnailed with the appropriate letter. It would take a classical scholar of considerable expertise to take issue with the author, far beyond my distant struggles with Caesar's *Gallic Wars* and Xenophon's *Anabasis*. If you ever wondered what those strange words meant and where they came from, this book tells you. You learn quite a lot about Greek and Latin myths too.

Reference

Jobling, J. A. 1991. *A Dictionary of Scientific Bird Names*. OUP, Oxford.

F. M. Gauntlett

The Status of Birds in Nottinghamshire

By Jason Reece

Hoopoe Press, 2009. Pbk, 156pp, line-drawings

ISBN 978-0-9560592-0-8 Subbuteo code M20573

£9.50 **BB Bookshop price £9.00**

Despite its landlocked position, Nottinghamshire has been responsible for some major birds in recent years, including Britain's first Redhead

Aythya americana, at Bleasby in March 1996, and the Nottingham Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*, which arrived the previous month. The

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county has an impressive list of 325 species and no fewer than four firsts for Britain, so *The Status of Birds in Nottinghamshire* has the potential for some interesting reading.

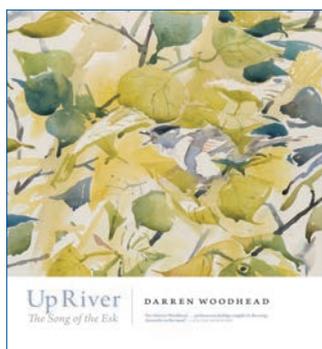
The first assessment of the county's birds was *Notes on the Birds of Nottinghamshire*, by Joseph Whitaker in 1907, and the most recent was *The Birds of Nottinghamshire: past and present*, by Austin Dobbs in 1975. Though all historical records are noted, the scope of the present book is focused on the period 1975–2007, coinciding with the political boundary changes of 1974 and the last review of the county's birds in 1975.

A brief description of the county is organised by topography, geology and land use. The main body of the book embraces details of all species

recorded in Nottinghamshire, with first and last dates for migrants, significant site counts, records of all rare vagrants and a list of key sites with grid references. The species accounts are pleasantly interspersed with the excellent line-drawings of local artist Chris Orgill. The book is thread bound and approximately 50% cheaper than it would have been in hardback, which should enhance both its durability and appeal.

As an instant guide to the breeding and rarity status of all the county's birds, and with all profits from sales being donated to Nottinghamshire Birdwatchers, I can recommend this book to anyone interested in the region's birds.

Ian Cowgill



Up River: the song of the Esk

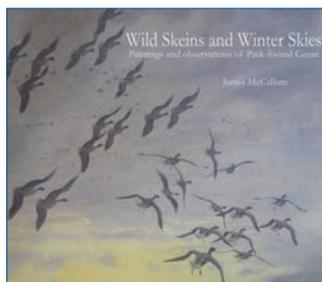
By Darren Woodhead

Birlinn, 2009

Hbk, 160pp, colour illustrations throughout

ISBN 978-1-84158-8346 Subbuteo code M20570

£29.99 **BB Bookshop price £27.00**



Wild Skeins and Winter Skies: paintings and observations of Pink-footed Geese

By James McCallum

Silver Brant, 2009

Hbk, 100pp, colour illustrations throughout

ISBN 978-0-9541695-4-1 Subbuteo code M20556

£35.00 **BB Bookshop price £31.50**

Darren Woodhead and James McCallum are foremost among the

most skilled exponents of sketching wildlife in the field. Their work is inspired by first-hand observations and executed in the field with uncanny accuracy and painterly freedom crafted by many years of sitting tucked away in the nooks and crannies of our country's wildest habitats. All-weather conditions are endured in this pursuit – I can only pray that they have invested wisely in haemorrhoid-cream futures!

Up River and *Wild Skeins and Winter Skies* are the latest publications to showcase these talents, revealing the respective artists' latest ventures into the wilds of Britain, and it is a particular delight to review these books side by side.

Darren Woodhead's *Up River* is based on three years as artist in residence around Carlops and the valley of the North Esk River. The subject matter varies from bleak snowscapes, where you can feel the cold blasting from the page, to intimate studies of nesting Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* and pages of fungi, which have a cosy Victorian feel to them. My favourites include the series of watercolours of Bullfinches *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* and a massive composition of Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* and Dunlins *Calidris alpina*. I was lucky enough to see this in the flesh at the Birdfair; it is stunning. Which leads me to my only tiny criticism, the originals are so big that sometimes, even in a good-sized book such as this, the reduction of the image is such that the detail can become a little noisy – maybe too much of a good thing squeezed into a small space.

By way of a contrast, James McCallum has chosen one species as his subject. For many years



he has painted, drawn or simply watched with care the Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* of his native Norfolk. *Wild Skeins and Winter Skies* is the culmination of this work. It is a brave man who produces a book of paintings based purely on one species, but I think he is canny and knows his local market extremely well and, of course, it is carried with the usual McCallum flair. The pages radiate with light and life, the geese gaggle in their efforts to get off the pages! The hours put into this and the dedication to his beloved geese is clear to see, but this is not just a book of pretty sunsets, there is plenty to be gained for both the art lover and the

serious ornithologist. James has always prided himself on his roughly-toughy out-in-all-weather approach to his art, but I couldn't help but notice the word 'van' cropping up a few times – is he going soft with age?

Both books are large format, well produced and lovely to hold – I have a thing about holding books! Both have been written in a way that is almost as evocative as the paintings themselves and are sympathetically designed. Reason to buy – simply to admire these artists at the top of their game.

Dan Powell

Wildlife Photography Masterclass: a beginner's guide to wildlife photography

By Chris Gomersall and David Tipling

LPS Creative Media, 2009

63 min DVD

Subbuteo code M60045

£19.95 (DVD) **BB Bookshop price £17.95**

This DVD features two of the UK's best-known wildlife photographers, Chris Gomersall and David Tipling. Both come across well, and the DVD format is useful in allowing us to watch them at work in the field (and in the back garden), and also in the 'digital darkroom'.

The presentation begins by looking at the 'kit bag', and sets out clearly the pros and cons of compact cameras, digiscoping (only briefly mentioned) and digital SLRs with their various lens options. A useful review of hides and camouflage gear is also included, along with frequent reminders that the welfare of the subject must always be the main consideration. Equally sensibly, as this presentation is aimed at the beginner, the discussion focuses mainly on the small-to-medium-range lenses rather than the more expensive, heavyweight telephotos, and discusses what can and cannot be achieved with the various options in this range.

This emphasis continues with a series of practical sessions, involving some approachable and accessible subjects, including a family of local Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes*. Advice on using food and drink to attract wildlife closer to the camera includes the use of hazelnuts to attract squirrels, which some photographers might find counter-productive! Farther afield, a trip to Bempton Cliffs provides some useful guidance on focusing techniques and problems of exposure at this bird-

photography hotspot.

The main session on processing images in the 'digital darkroom' (workflow) provides a good grounding for the beginner in what can easily become a highly complex and confusing area, given the wide range of different software programs on offer. Clever camera work clearly shows the actions performed on the computer, zooming in and out of the screen menus to reveal more detail.

The additional 'special features' at the end of the DVD provide some extra pointers, including the intriguingly named 'Exposure Bootcamp' – a title which has more macho promise than it actually delivers. In some ways these extras, particularly the additional session on image optimisation using Adobe Lightroom, come across as slightly vague and random, and may hinder rather than help the main presentation. However, they do illustrate the point that every photographer does things slightly differently, and that beginners need to experiment to discover what works best for them.

This DVD covers a lot of ground and, thanks to the wealth of skill and experience on offer from the two photographers, provides a clear and well-presented introduction to wildlife photography, with lots of practical tips and advice.

Bill Baston

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The Sounds of Raptors and Falcons

By Karl-Heinz Dingler, Christian Fackelmann and Andreas Schulze

Musikverlag Edition AMPLE, 2009

Two CDs (156 mins) and 36-page booklet in English, French and German

ISBN 978-3-938147-17-7. Subbuteo code V10081

£17.95 **BB Bookshop price £15.95**

These two CDs present 311 recordings of the calls and other sounds of 103 species of birds of prey – including all those regularly occurring in the Western Palearctic. In addition, the selection offered goes beyond that region to incorporate a range of species from each of the continents, although it is not clear what criteria were used to make the choice. There are over 320 raptors in the world, so only a third are represented here – and while the selection offered for Africa covers most of the commoner species, the same cannot be said for the other continents. There are some strange omissions. For example, several of the caracaras are included, but not Red-throated Caracara *Daptrius americanus*, which is one of the most vocal raptors I know. From Australia the Black Falcon

Falco subniger is featured – but nothing else. At the other extreme, a recording of chicks of the *neglectus* race of Common Kestrel *F. tinnunculus* from the Cape Verde Islands is included.

Of particular interest are a series of ten recordings of Red-footed Falcons *F. vespertinus*, representing the entire breeding cycle from the establishment of a territory to calls of nestlings at the nest and on fledging, as well as alarm calls. The recordings are clear and the booklet provides brief details of each recording, although often without any indication of when or where the recording was made. Further details, including a full list of the species included, are available at www.birdsongs.de

Keith Betton

Peregrine Falcon Populations: status and perspectives in the 21st century

Edited by Janusz Sielicki and Tadeusz Mizera

Turul & Poznan University of Life Sciences, 2009

Hbk, 800pp, numerous colour photos and figures

ISBN 978-83-920969-6-2 Subbuteo code M20455

£75.00 **BB Bookshop price £69.95**

This attractively produced volume consists of no fewer than 62 short papers, most of which were presented at the Second International Peregrine Conference, held near Poznan, Poland, in September 2007. As befits the conference's title, the papers are drawn from across the globe, though most (roughly 45%) concern central and eastern Europe. Such a bias is not unwelcome, given that this geographical area has not, to my knowledge, been well covered in earlier English language reviews on the Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*.

The papers are varied and split into six broad categories: population dynamics, food and feeding, interactions with humans, reintroductions, urban populations, and, as a bonus not even hinted at in the book's title, a concluding section consisting of four interesting papers on the Saker Falcon *F. cherrug* in central Europe. There are plenty of intriguing facts to be found, and issues to be thought about. For example, despite a ban on the use of certain organochlorine biocides in Germany, levels

of chemical contamination of Peregrine eggs in that country have not fallen as far as expected, probably owing to DDT residues from anti-malaria campaigns in the tropics being redistributed through the atmosphere to colder regions of the globe. Also disturbing is the matter of male hybrid falcons that have escaped from captivity mating with wild female Peregrines (female hybrids are apparently infertile), as has occurred recently in eastern Germany and in England. In this connection, it was also interesting to read that natural hybridisation has taken place between certain species of large falcon where their ranges meet in North America and Eurasia. Several contributions discuss the decline and subsequent recovery of various Peregrine populations, while on a lighter note there is even a paper considering the use of the images of falcons on stamps.

Enthusiastic students of large falcons are sure to find this book informative and thought-provoking.

Pete Combridge

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The Collins Bird Guide is a field guide to the birds of the Western Palearctic. Its authors are Lars Svensson, Killian Mullarney, Dan Zetterström and Peter J. Grant, and it is illustrated by Killian Mullarney and Dan Zetterström (with two plates of North American passerines contributed by Larry McQueen).[1] It has been described as "undoubtedly the finest field guide that has ever been produced", and "the last great bird book of the 20th century".[2]. The first edition was translated to 14 European languages, including Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch and German. A second edition, revised and enlarged, was published in January 2010.[6]. The guide covers Europe, North Atlantic islands, much of North Africa and the Middle East. The single most popular bird guide, with some of the finest illustrations available. Click to have a closer look. Select version. ISBN: 9780007268146 Edition: 2 Paperback Mar 2010 In stock. £14.99£19.99. #170498. While the new order in which the birds are presented in this superb book, will not be to everyone's liking, this 2nd edition accurately reflects new and revised taxonomy. The text and illustrations are mostly familiar to readers of the first edition, but overall, I would say this new edition is even better than the first! Simply wonderful! Alternatives. Fågelguiden: Europas och Medelhavsområdets fåglar i fält [Collins Bird Guide: The Most Complete Guide to the Birds of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East] Originally published in Swedish. Collins Bird Guide 2nd Edition. March 11, 2016 Mike Roberts. Authors Lars Svensson, Killian Mullarney and Dan Zetterström, HarperCollins 2009, ISBN 978-0-00-726726-2, HB, ISBN 978-0-00-726814-6, SB. There are many revisions to the first edition due largely to taxonomic changes and this has affected the treatment of wildfowl, shearwaters, large gulls, thrushes (including the wheatears), warblers, flycatchers, shrikes and finches. There are no less than 41 new species, 33 of which are the result of taxonomic changes, and several subspecies have received more detailed treatment.