

BOOK REVIEW

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Handbook of the Birds of the World, Volume 2. New World Vultures to Guineafowl. Edited by Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott and Jordi Sargatal. 1994. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. 638 pp., 60 color plates, 302 color photographs, 590 distribution maps. ISBN 84-87334-15-6. Cloth, \$175.00.—The volumes in this series are magnificent in both appearance and content. This volume covers the Falconiformes and Galliformes, and volume 3 (Hoatzin to alcids) will appear before this review is published. Twelve volumes are planned in all. The price tag might seem excessive until one puts things in proper perspective. Volume 2 weighs in at 8 pounds, for a cost of about \$1.37 per ounce. By comparison, Cody's *Habitat Selection in Birds* (1985) now costs \$136.00 in cloth, or about \$4.00 per ounce (and even in 1985, it cost more than \$2.00 per ounce). Given the sheer quantity of information and quality of presentation, I believe that *The Handbook* is an exceptional deal in today's market of inflated book prices.

The book is organized by family, each of which contains a general review of the topics "Systematics," "Morphological Aspects," "Habitat," "General Habits," "Voice," "Food and Feeding," "Breeding," "Movements," "Relationships with Man" and "Status and Conservation." Following the family introductions are the species accounts, typically two to four per page. Virtually every extant species is covered, with each account containing notes on taxonomy, subspecies and distribution (including a range map), habitat, food, breeding biology, movements and conservation status. Each account concludes with a list of recent references. In addition, each species is depicted in a color

plate (averaging more than 20 individuals per plate), often with multiple paintings to show differences in sex, color morph and subspecies. The color plates appear to be excellent, although I am not qualified to evaluate all of them. The color photographs scattered throughout the text are absolutely outstanding. A tremendous range of species is presented, and each photograph is sharply focused and pleasingly composed. Moreover, many of the photographs depict individuals that are actually *doing* something besides posing for portraits. For example, a Verreaux's Eagle (*Aquila verreauxii*) is seen capturing a hyrax (p. 78), an African Harrier-Hawk (*Polyboroides typus*) hanging from a weaver's nest (with a nestling in its bill; p. 81), and a female Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*) delivering a prey item to its nestlings (p. 101).

I should mention that the family overviews and species accounts were written by well-qualified raptor biologists, including Richard Bierregaard, William Clark, David Houston, Alan Kemp, Lloyd Kiff, Bernd-Ulrich Meyburg, Penny Olsen, Alan Poole, Jean Marc Thiollay and Clayton White. The depth of treatment in the species accounts does not surpass Brown and Amadon's *Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World* (1968), but the updated information and excellent plates and photographs provided in *The Handbook* make it an excellent companion piece to Brown and Amadon. As a sound, general reference, *The Handbook* will be indispensable. I cannot imagine that anyone with a keen interest in raptors could be disappointed with this book. As a bonus, the material on the Galliformes is just as impressive as that on the raptors. I urge you to obtain your own copy, or at the very least, to prod your library into acquiring the entire series.—**Jeff Marks, Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812 U.S.A.**