

and the 23 cm Slaty-legged Crake as being the same size. All the other plates are in proportion.

I was a little disappointed that the author did not put Vega and American Herring Gull on same page so the reader could make a more direct comparison. In general I found the colours accurate. The Wood Swallow is perhaps a little too dark and the female Barrow's Goldeneye's bill should be more yellow.

Despite some irritating points of confusion, I think it is an important and valuable addition to the world's field guides. It is a vast improvement over the 1984 *Birds of the USSR* by Flint, Boehme, Kostin and Kuz-

netsov [Princeton] as well as the dated Korean and Taiwanese English-language guides. This guide's main rival is *Birds of Europe, Russia, China and Japan: Passerines*, by Norman Arlott [Princeton], but this covers fewer genera and is less detailed with twice as many birds per page. Brazil's book adds significantly to the coverage by modern field guides and it will be a useful field book for residents [who read English] and visitors alike.

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Birds of the Horn of Africa – Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, and Socotra

By Nigel Redman, Terry Stevenson, and John Fanshawe. 2009. Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey. 488 pages. 40.00 USD Paper.

This book covers the volatile countries of northeast Africa; Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia plus the islands of Socotra. Socotra is a part of the Republic of Yemen and is a group of four islands off the coast of the Horn 350 km south of the Arabian peninsula. It has well over 250 Socotran plant species of are found nowhere else. This includes the dragon's blood tree whose red sap was sold as dragon's blood. There are also several endemic birds, [Socotra Starling, Socotra Sunbird, Socotra Sparrow and Socotra Grosbeak]

The book follows the currently-used format for field guides. It covers over 1000 species and is fully illustrated. As soon as I opened the book I recognised some of the artwork. It is taken from Stevenson and Fanshawe's earlier book, *The Birds of East Africa: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi* (2006) [reviewed in *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* 120(1): 113]. I liked the high quality of these illustrations by John Gale and Brian Small then, and I still do now. They have proven to be of great value in the field as my now wrinkled *Birds of East Africa* will attest.

The range maps show the distributions as different colours and shading [resident, visitor, etc.] and they also have the highlands and major rivers. While this is useful, it is a little more difficult to read, especially for birds of limited distribution [e.g., the African Crake]. For the most part, I like this addition. Certainly it is clear that the highlands are more species-rich than the coastal lowlands.

Although we usually identify new birds using the illustrations, it is often the text that clinches the decision. The text in this book provides valuable insights into all species, but is a particular help in separating difficult, look-alike species. This is very important for birds like larks and pipits, even more so when dealing with endemics like Archer's Lark. The authors carefully evaluate the likely subspecies that might be present so they can accurately assess the differences between similar species.

The thousand plus birds covered include all the single specimen records, even those washed up dead on the beach. The authors list dubious and unaccepted sightings as well. All birds, even the vagrants, are given full coverage – complete illustrations and text. Despite this large number of species the book is not oversized, it will still fit in your pack.

Now comes the critical question; Who is the intended audience? There are tours advertised for this area and some British companies have regular trips to Ethiopia, despite their Foreign and Commonwealth Office advising against ALL travel. There are travel advisories from U.S. and Canada too. Ethiopia has suffered drought, famine, war, and bad governance. A 31-year war gained independence for Eritrea in 1993, but this led to border war. Somalia [and the unrecognized Republic of Somaliland.] does not have an effective government and has had years of fighting between rival warlords. As well, fighting has occurred between Islamist fighters and the interim government. Poverty has spawned pirates and illegally dumped nuclear and toxic waste. Djibouti was ravaged by a civil war until 2000. This is not a comforting situation for the prospective traveller. You will have to be more than a little adventurous. There are wildlife groups in Ethiopia, Somalia and Yemen. Yet with average incomes around a few hundred dollars a year, I do not see a large local market.

It is sad to reflect on this poor political situation is stopping the flow of ecotourists with their much needed cash, because now there is a top quality field-guide to the birds of this diverse region. In addition to the 61 endemics and 17 near-endemics [tabulated at the rear of the book] you can look for most of the birds from the south [Kenya], from the north [Egypt] as well as Eurasian migrants. A well-organized trip of two weeks will net you 500 or more species. This is a good book and more important, it is a landmark book — covering a long-neglected area. I hope it does well.

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