

## Book Reviews

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by R. Todd Engstrom

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**Handbook of the Birds of the World, Special Volume: New Species and Global Index** edited by Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott, Jordi Sargatal, and David A. Christie. 2013. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, Spain. 812 pages, 214 bird illustrations, 50 figures, 319 photographs, 94 distribution maps. \$175 (hardcover). ISBN 978-84-96553-88-0.

With the arrival of the *Special Volume* (No. 17), this most remarkable series in ornithology comes to its completion. Work on the illustrated *Handbook of the Birds of the World* (HBW) started in the 1980s, and the first volume was published in 1992. The leader and driving force for this series is Josep del Hoyo, who organized the project under the heading of the Fundacio Mascort, with the partnership of the International Council for Bird Protection, now BirdLife International (a 60-page introductory essay by Peter J. Schei in the *Special Volume* thoroughly covers the history and work of BirdLife International). The first three editors of this final volume were associated with the project from the beginning; only David Christie joined the core editorial team later. The 17 volumes were published at an astonishing rate, the final volume appearing 21 years after the first one. Publishing the HBW was not sufficient for Lynx Edicions. In addition, this group has undertaken a similar series on the mammals of the world (three of the planned eight volumes have been published) in addition to numerous books on birds and other facets of natural history.

With the completion of the HBW, ornithologists have good coverage for each family of birds, with a general essay, many excellent photographs of many members of the family, a list of the recognized species with color illustrations, often with both males and females and sometimes distinctive geographic races shown, and a detailed account for each species with the taxonomy,

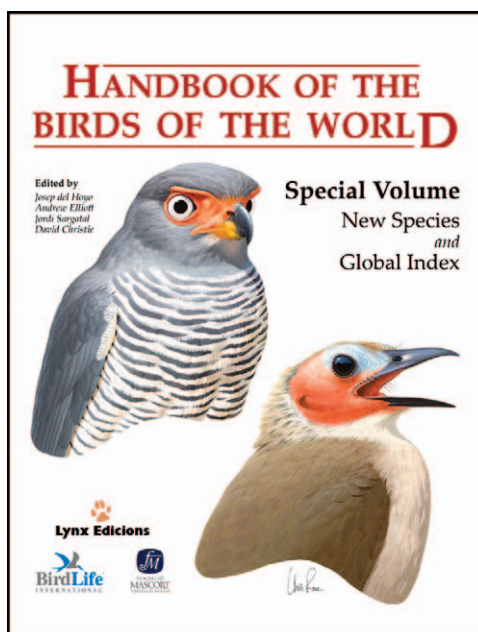
distribution, range map, feeding and food, breeding, status and conservation, and a bibliography. Extinct species are not included. Each volume has an introductory essay on a different subject and a detailed bibliography. Although most ornithologists may disagree with a species recognized within a family and some of the details of the included information, the HBW has accomplished a review of the birds of the world that is not available in any other single source. The HBW, therefore, provides an excellent starting

point for information on any avian family, especially for topics in field biology, although it is weak in areas of laboratory studies such as morphology, physiology, and embryology.

The HBW sensibly followed the classification of birds presented in Peters' Check-list, yet there have been many proposals for new classifications, based largely on molecular work. A nice summary (70 pages) on "Avian classification in flux" is presented by Jon Fjeldså, who also provides an account (39 pages) of "The discovery of new bird species," which serves as the introduction to the coverage (35 pages) of the new avian species described since the treatment of each family in earlier volumes of the HBW. The dust cover of each earlier volume has illustrations of

the first and the last species included in that volume; however, it is not clear to me why the two birds on the dust cover of this final volume were chosen.

The basic reason for organizing this *Special Volume* was to present information on the species that have been described since the appearance of the earlier volume containing each family, but excluding those species taxa recognized by the splitting of known species after the publication of any family. This task is difficult in itself, as much effort is needed to keep abreast of the descriptions of new species. Professor Meise presented the first such



review at the Oxford International Ornithological Congress (Meise 1938); subsequent reviews were written by Ernst Mayr and others, and most recently by Martens and Bahr (2013); it is time for the next review to be undertaken. Hence, I do not know whether all the newly described species have been included in this section, but one, *Forpus flavicollis* (Bertagnolli and Racheli 2010; also see Notton 2011), is excluded. There is considerable doubt about whether this parrot is a species, yet no comment is included in this section on the criteria used to include or exclude newly proposed species. Citations are included for all the new species included in this section (pp. 187–222), but getting this information for each new species is difficult because the authors for each species are not given in the species accounts. I urge that when mentioning a species name for the first time, in any publication, the author and year be included. A list of references for all the new species in this volume and a general reference list are included.

A most attractive part of this volume is the 175 pages of photographs (many full-page); I especially like the European Goldfinch (p. 186). Lynx Edicions must have huge files of avian photographs, and I hope that they develop some way to make these available to ornithologists. Most useful is the global index (309 pages), which includes separate indices for scientific, English, French, German, and Spanish names of all the birds in the *HBW*, referencing the volume and page number of the description of each species in the earlier 16 volumes.

The most surprising, and perhaps most controversial, part of this volume is the description of 15 new species of Amazonian birds (pp. 224–310), which had been kept secret before publication. These species' descriptions are introduced with a section (15 pp.) on "Fifteen New Species of Amazonian Birds" by Bret M. Whitney and Mario Cohn-Haft; the history of this part of the *Special Volume* is given in the Introduction (p. 11). These 15 species are fully described, mostly in conjunction with a revision of the species group related to the new species. Some concern exists about whether the name for the first species described in this section is available because of the provision of the Code (fourth edition, 1999:19) in Article 16 (on names published after 1999). This article states that "Every new name published after 1999, including new replacement names (*nomina nova*) must be explicitly indicated as intentionally new." Recommendation 16A (p. 20) suggests using the term "sp. nov." attached to the first use of the new name. This was not done for any of the descriptions, but for 14 of the new names, the title of the description includes the term "new species," which would meet the requirements of Article 16. But no such mention exists in the title of the first species, *Nystalus obamai*, described by Whitney et al. (pp. 240–244). Lack of mention that this is a new species would mean that the

name, *Nystalus obamai*, would not be available for purposes of zoological nomenclature; hence, I asked three other members of the IOC committee on avian nomenclature to read this description. Only one spotted the phrase "of the new species within the striolated-puffbird complex" at the end of the section on Etymology (p. 242), which seems to fill minimally the requirement of Article 16 of the Code. Hence, the description of *Nystalus obamai* is available for zoological nomenclature, although the intention of the authors is far from being explicit.

Another problem is whether these descriptions of new avian species from the Amazonian basin are readily available to most ornithologists working in this area. This is somewhat doubtful, and some objection can be raised on the decision to publish these 15 new species in this volume. Given that Lynx Edicions is establishing a website for future information on avian species, I would suggest that the articles describing these 15 species be placed on this site, independent of *HBW Alive* (<http://hbw.com>).

Although publication of this *Special Volume* of the *HBW* completes this wonderful project, Lynx Edicions is continuing their work with a planned Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World in two volumes (nonpasserines and passerines) and a system of updating under the title *HBW Alive*, which is available in many languages via Google's automatic translator. Further information on these ongoing parts of the *HBW* is available at [www.hbw.com](http://www.hbw.com).

I have greatly enjoyed reading each volume of the *HBW*, learned a great deal from them, and used them as an important source of information. And I marveled that in two decades, Lynx Edicions has produced this monumental publication in avian biology, covering all species of the world's birds, with illustrations of every species, numerous excellent photographs, and an excellent summary of each family. All ornithologists are in their debt. On behalf of the community of avian biologists, I would like to congratulate and thank Josep del Hoyo and all the members of his group on the completion of this ornithological library.

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**The Legacy of a Red Hills Hunting Plantation: Tall Timbers Research Station & Land Conservancy** by Robert L. Crawford and William R. Brueckheimer. 2012. University Press of Florida, Gainesville. 335 pages, 286 numbered figures, maps, 4 appendices. \$34.95 (hardcover). ISBN 978–0813041483.

Located in the red clay hill region of southern Georgia and north Florida, Tall Timbers had its genesis in well-to-do consumptive northerners taking the cure at sanitariums in the supposedly healthier winter air of Thomasville, Georgia, in the late 19th century. Their families and friends found the area agreeable and began buying up nearby plantation lands, mainly as quail-hunting preserves. For centuries the pinelands in this area had been kept open and productive for wildlife by fires caused by lightning or set by Native Americans to drive game, and later by what became known as prescribed burning. But by the 1920s, intense public pressure against deliberate or even accidental burning began to influence policy, fanned by an almost evangelical movement called the “Dixie Crusaders,” who traveled in truck caravans throughout the south preaching against the evils of forest fires well before the era of Smoky the Bear propaganda. As a result, prescribed burning was halted, the plantations grew up into tangled brush, and quail populations plummeted.

Concerned landowners formed a consortium, the Cooperative Quail Investigation, that got under way in 1924 with Herbert L. Stoddard as chief scientist. The life history and ecology of *Colinus virginianus* was investigated perhaps more thoroughly than any other species of bird up to that time. Stoddard's epochal book *The Bobwhite Quail* appeared in 1931. Among Stoddard's chief recommendations was resumption of prescribed burning on the quail plantations. When proper ecological conditions were

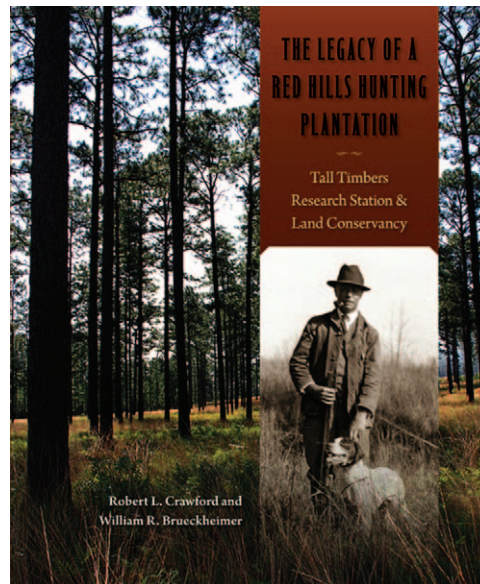
restored, quail stocks increased markedly and Stoddard achieved something of the status of a savior.

One of Stoddard's near neighbors and good friends, Tall Timbers Plantation owner Henry (Harry) Beadel, was in part responsible for continuing a portion of the previous consortium as the Cooperative Quail Study Association in order to keep Stoddard on salary and benefit from his management advice to members.

Because of Stoddard's genius and foresight, he was able to persuade Beadel to allow the construction of a television transmission tower on a high hill at Tall Timbers Plantation. It was finished in October 1955 and immediately caused mass mortality of migrating birds. Stoddard set right to work getting the surrounding land cleared and planted to lawn to permit easy recovery of downed birds. A long-term program of predator control was initiated to prevent loss of specimens from ants, mammals, crows, and Great Horned Owls, among others. This careful, years-long quantitative study provided insights into the numbers and kinds of birds passing over the

Tallahassee region that would never be apparent to observers on the ground.

In 1958, Beadel donated part of his plantation land and, with others, incorporated the Tall Timbers Research Station, all of his land and additional funding passing to the station at his death in 1963. The station always maintained programs of research into game bird and timber management, but the first priority upon establishment was a systematic approach to the science of fire ecology through the setting out of marked plots of land in differing habitats that were to be burned at varying intervals. In my early high school years, I was asked to participate in the project by censusing the birds on these plots, which seemed like a wonderful way to get into the field in the days before I had a car. Mr. Beadel still called



the shots, however, and one of his rules was that anyone working in the field at Tall Timbers had to wear leather knee boots, because of his concern about rattlesnakes. Furthermore, the protocol was to wear one's jeans outside the boots to better deter the dreaded *Crotalus*. I discovered on my first day that the dreaded *Trombicula* was a far worse menace. The chiggers happily migrated in the dark under my jeans but must have despaired of ever gaining sustenance during the long march up the leather of my new boots. To a mite, they all burrowed in right at my boot-tops, raising inch-high welts around both calves that practically crippled me for a week. That was very disillusioning. More so was the discovery that the plots I was supposed to census were only a half acre in area. I quickly made myself *puer non grata* by pointing out the obvious fact that you couldn't say much about the population dynamics of birds based on a half-acre plot. But the plots were very successful for demonstrating effects of fire on plants and invertebrates.

Another important development in which Stoddard played a pivotal role was the preservation of the 206-acre Wade Tract in southeastern Thomas County, Georgia, one of the largest remaining stands of virgin long-leaf pine and wiregrass still in existence. This came under the umbrella of Tall Timbers through a conservation easement effected in 1979.

Tall Timbers became virtually synonymous with fire ecology through annual conferences and the publication of their proceedings. The staff and administration became effective proselytizers for the use of controlled burning to maintain fire-climax ecosystems around the world. The station also sponsored innovative research on ecology and systematics of earthworms, insects, salamanders, rattlesnakes, Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (*Picoides borealis*), and even vertebrate fossils in the Florida Big Bend, among many other subjects, and became a beacon for wise land use and conservation. New buildings were added to the

grounds for laboratories, museum, library, and offices. *Legacy* relates these accomplishments in detail, each chapter having its own bibliography and suggested reading list, although I would have found a single terminal bibliography more useful.

With a weight of nearly 5 pounds and a width of 22 inches when opened, *Legacy* is not to be read with book in one hand and a bourbon in the other. Years ago I remember master forest manager Leon Neel, a major protagonist in the Tall Timbers story, telling a group of us that paper companies would love to be able to use old-growth long-leaf pine from the quail plantations because the longer fibers of the old timbers yield a product much superior to that made from ordinary pulpwood. The excessively wide margins and other vast blank spaces in *Legacy* certainly prompt thoughts of how paper companies must benefit from the largesse of pretentious book designers. Many of the illustrations are snapshots of people—researchers, landowners, volunteers, board members, tenant farmers, and others. Although it was clearly intended to adorn every coffee table in every plantation house in the Red Hills, the book deserves the serious attention of naturalists, ecologists, and wildlife biologists. Even though I grew up in the formative years of the station and was personally acquainted with most of the major players, I found much information here that was new to me. The volume was exceptionally carefully researched, and the writing is lucid and gratifyingly free of syntactical infelicities. It is an important contribution to the history of fire ecology and land management in the best interests of conservation.

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