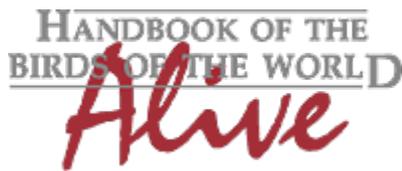


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HBW Alive

Reviewed by Frank Lambert on [August 3rd, 2014](#).



[HBW Alive](#) is a comprehensive, online reference resource for the birds of the world. The starting point of HBW Alive is the acclaimed 17-Volume [Handbook of the Birds of the World](#) (HBW), with its 13,367 pages, 10,200 maps, over 20,600 figures, about 100,000 bibliographic references, and an incredible 15 million words. All of this has now been made available online through HBW Alive. Apart from the original photographs, all HBW texts, plates, and maps are included in HBW Alive. Photos are gradually being uploaded to the species accounts, and there are also thousands of links to photos and videos from other internet resources, including the [Internet Bird Collection](#), also run by Lynx Editions, which currently hosts some 82,000 videos, 111,000 photos, and 12,000 sound recordings covering 94% of the bird species of the world.

Unlike a book, however, the contents of HBW Alive are constantly being updated by an international team of professional ornithologists. Furthermore, subscribers are able to moderate content. The website incorporates an array of digital tools that not only permit instant access to the information but also allow users to customize the entire website to suit their personal preferences. Subscribers to HBW Alive also automatically receive relevant recent information from scientific journals worldwide through an [ornithological news service](#).

At present, the site contains full accounts for every bird species known to science up to June 2013, including distribution maps, color illustrations, and

links to photographs and videos where available. The taxonomy is, compared to [IOC](#), out of date in many places. For example, the three species of banded pitta have not yet been recognized. However, HBW and BirdLife international will shortly publish the first volume of its [Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World](#), and from that time onwards the taxonomy in HBW Alive will follow that comprehensive work.

As new species are described, short accounts with pictures, where available, and links to the original scientific descriptions are added, with the ultimate intention of creating full species accounts. Since 2013 more than 25 species have already been added to the website. A Voice section, lacking in the first HBW volumes, is currently being added to all bird species.

In addition to the species accounts, the site has extensive chapters for every bird family, treating systematics, morphological aspects, habitat, general habits, voice, food and feeding, breeding, relationships with man, and status and conservation. Each of these chapters has links to relevant photographs, videos, and selected internet sites, including the BirdLife Data Zone, Arkive, Encyclopedia of Life, and others.

Geographic filter ■ No active filters My account Logout

HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF THE WORLD
Alive

Home Families Species Plates

SPECIES FIGURES

Order: Family: Genus: Common name:

Size: All figures Scaled List view Items per page:

1. Song Sparrow Tit (Poecile hesperis) ssp. leucotis	2. Marsh Tit (Poecile palustris) ssp. palustris	3. Willow Tit (Poecile montanus) ssp. montanus	4. Carolina Chickadee (Poecile carolinensis)	5. Black-capped Chickadee (Poecile atricapillus) ssp. lunifer	6. Mountain Chickadee (Poecile gambeli)
7. Mountain Chickadee (Poecile montanus) ssp. adleri	8. White-browed Tit (Poecile superciliosus)	9. Rusty-breasted Tit (Poecile flavus)	10. Siberian Tit (Poecile cinctus)	11. Tonal Chickadee (Poecile rufonotatus)	12. Chestnut-backed Chickadee (Poecile rufescens) ssp. palustris
13. Varied Tit (Poecile varius)	14. White-crowned Tit (Poecile griseus)	15. White-breasted Nuthatch (Sitta carolinensis)	16. Black-capped Tit (Poecile montanus) ssp. leucotis	17. Coal Tit (Parus ater)	18. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (Picopeucaea arizonae)

The website is user-friendly, with access to information via a classic key-word search box, a taxonomic tree which permits the user to browse all bird families, species, and subspecies, and a geographical tree organized into bio-geographical regions and countries. There is also a menu bar with tabs for species, families, and plates. Not only is it possible to display all the information about a species, but by using the Compare button one can add similar species and view the pictures, distribution, voice, etc of two species simultaneously, although doing so is not intuitive and it took me time to figure out how to do this. Comparing three or more species at the same time was something I was unable to accomplish. However, being able to compare two similar species is a very useful feature of the website, and hopefully it will in time allow more extensive comparisons. Furthermore, there are links to full bibliographic references included in all the updated texts, which eventually lead one to the applicable journal website, pdf article (where legally available), abstract, or to Google search and Google Scholar, with no need to type additional reference details. Tools to keep personal notes on bird species, as well as to check or bookmark them, are also provided.

Also provided is the ability to create country checklists, with optional color illustrations of every species. These illustrated checklists can be customized in a variety of ways and printed or exported to Excel or Word. For some countries, such as Mexico and China, they can be split into northern and southern lists, although the geographic boundary in such cases is not clearly defined. The bird lists, however, do not go down to the level of subspecies.

Finally, Supporting Members are able to use a personal bird database system - [My Birding](#) - that allows users to keep track of their own records or lists. This recording system can be organized by date, location, trips, etc., but it is probably not as sophisticated as other new websites, such as [IGoTerra.com](#) (a mainly Swedish initiative), which also allows you to plan future birding trips and share the information directly with other people joining your trip. Like HBW Alive, IGoTerra is a website requiring a subscription but you can access country lists and other information without subscribing. This part of the HBW Alive website is still being developed, but a stated key goal will be to integrate the content of HBW Alive with the user's own data and observations, conveniently showing illustrations, descriptions, distribution maps, and so forth of a given species whilst they are entering their records.

Maps do not yet show the distribution of individual subspecies, even for species in which this would be relatively easy to show (e.g those with island distributions, such as Black-faced Pitta *Pitta anerythra*) which is a pity, but probably something that will be rectified in time.

One potentially useful feature of HBW Alive is that it can be viewed in about 70

languages - including Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, and Indonesian - using a Google Translate button on the page you are looking at. This seems to work very well, though whether the translation is accurate of course depends on the service provided by the Google Translate software.

Both the pace of the updating process and the quantity and quality of digital tools finally incorporated into [HBW Alive](#) will ultimately depend on the support the international ornithological and birding community accords to this groundbreaking project.

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