

HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF THE WORLD ALIVE
LYNX EDITIONS PUBLICATIONS WITH BIRDLIFE
INTERNATIONAL

By Jo. Gregson: Curator of Birds, Paignton Zoo

Many of us have been using the Handbook of the Birds of the World since the first volume was released in 1992. The series has been an invaluable resource of information for professionals and hobbyists alike. It is not easy to imagine life without it. Even so, a price of around £180 for each of the 16 volumes can be a bit intimidating. Many of us have collected them as they were published, but for new subscribers it is a big outlay.

These days more and more people are using the internet for their research and there are plenty of bird guides to be found in electronic formats. During 2013 Lynx Editions created a live web based edition of the HBW. The new online database has used the HBW hard copies as a foundation. It includes information on all the species accounts that can be found in the 16 volumes, and offers some snappy additions that cannot be replicated in a book.

The user-friendly site includes an index of the Orders on the left hand side that has drop down options for the Families. From the family index there are then drop down options for individual species. An easier option is the search box that can be used based on scientific or common names or for a wider search such as finches. Another useful tool is the “compare” option where you can select similar species, for example a Swinhoe’s, Edward’s and Imperial pheasant could be selected and then viewed on the same page with all their text side by side. For many of the species there are video clips, sound recordings and photos. The HBW Alive site is linked to the free “Internet Bird Collection” <http://ibc.lynxeds.com> where 94% of the world’s birds are covered in various formats.

All members have a password and can visit the site whenever they have a connection. I have used HBW all over the world without any problems. The site can also be opened on iPad, Android pads, and Smart Phones. It is not possible to access the videos on those devices that don’t have a flash drive, otherwise they run very smoothly. The small phone screens are a bit fiddly, but are certainly good enough for short periods.

I find the membership to be good value; it would take many years of membership to get anywhere near to the cost of the hard copies. The convenience of having the E books wherever I am means that I now use the Alive site far more than the books.

There is an option to take the higher grade “Supporting Membership” which allows access to the over 90,000 bibliographical references used. Providing the original abstracts are available on the internet you will be able to open them from the links provided. There is also a new, “My Birding”, section that allows you to record your bird sightings along with other information about your trips.

The cost of membership for one year is £29.95; there is also a one off registration fee of £20. The cost of the supporting membership for one year is £ 44.95, plus a one off registration fee of £20. For more information about Lynx Editions go to <http://www.lynxeds.com>.

RAYMOND SAWYER SCHOLARSHIP 2015

The Society was delighted to receive a greatly improved response to the scholarship in its second year. The very strong field of 19 candidates presented the selection panel with an extremely difficult task. The majority of applications were from the UK, but we also had applicants from Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands, and even one from the USA.

Many candidates have, or had started with, their own bird collections, but most are now trying to build careers in aviculture and avian conservation. Some are already employed as keepers, others working towards this goal through study and voluntary placements, while others are simply aiming to improve their skills as hobbyist breeders.

With a number of excellent candidates, the competition for this year’s scholarship was a close-run contest, but the scholarship was eventually awarded to Rosemary Drew. Rosemary, who has a special interest in incubation, is from the UK, but is currently working with hummingbirds at a breeding centre in Italy. She impressed the selectors with the way she had pursued opportunities to improve her skills and knowledge in specific areas, and had then applied what she had learned directly to improve the management of species in her care and pass on techniques to others. Therefore we are confident that she will make the best use possible of the scholarship.

We look forward to hearing Rosemary’s experiences at the course, and look forward to an equally, if not more, successful response to the scholarship next year. We are grateful to Cage & Aviary Birds for their cooperation in publicising and awarding the scholarship, and to Tim Wright at Durrell for his valuable input.