

Book review

LYNX ILLUSTRATED CHECKLIST OF THE MAMMALS OF SOUTH ASIA: AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN, INDIA, NEPAL, BHUTAN, BANGLADESH, SRI LANKA

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This is a house publication of Lynx, Barcelona. It is the second in a series that focus on regions of interest. It is based on texts in the Handbook of the Mammals of the World (HMW) series (Wilson and Mittermeier 2009–2020), with appropriate modifications and updates. It is compiled by Andrew Elliott and Albert Martínez Vilalta both the senior editors in the HMW series; thus both well acquainted with the material to put this book together. The lead illustrator is Toni Llobet, the lead illustrator of the Illustrated Checklist of the Mammals of the World (Burgin *et al.* 2020).

This book presents an illustrated checklist of the mammals of the south Asian region, a region with great habitat diversity stretching from the Nicobar Islands at the western edge of Indonesia to Pakistan. Its aim is stated as: to furnish up-to-date information on the mammals occurring in the region. It claims to be a checklist but presents more as a checklist/field guide hybrid; with its illustrations maps and explanatory text on the same pages - not facing pages. This design makes it easier to navigate than those with the text and illustrations on facing pages. Its organisation is typical with contents, introduction (including a regional map), a 2-page list of highlight areas and then the checklist followed by references and an index. Naturally the book is dominated by the 152-page checklist, which encompasses some 540 species.

The largest audience will undoubtedly be people in the south Asian region, but will extend to those many researchers interested in the region and its animals. The book's easy to follow layout and clear illustrations will make it a useful field guide to the region. The opening illustrations and accounts are the Asian elephant *Elephas maximus* and the dugong *Dugong dugon*, which immediately indicated to me that this book would claim some very interesting mammals. I suspect other readers would also be drawn in at that point. Further into the book I noticed that

the tiger *Panthera tigris* and lion *Panthera leo* ranges almost meet and are separated only by the Gulf of Khambhat (this is an outlying population of lions).

Clearly the most unambiguous strength of this book is the animals of the region: they are diverse and iconic. The book's layout is crisp and clear, and the descriptions juxtaposed with the high-quality illustrations enhances its on-ground usefulness, but not enough for a field guide. In contrast its greatest weakness is that it provides too little background information for a checklist. Thus, it sits somewhere in the middle as a good book to flick through quickly, as I did to notice the geographical proximity of the tiger with the lion (further investigations did unearth that they occasionally meet!). The text will further educational prospects in the English speaking regions of southern Asia. As a research aid I imagine it as a starter text. Yet, it will surely be picked up at Australian and North American universities by anyone from or interested in the region.

Since the research is taken directly from the Handbooks of Mammals of the World (Vols 1–9), but updated, it is trusted to be well researched and reliable. A page and a half of references are given before the index, although I suspect they do not reflect the knowledge within. The supplementary material includes a semi-hard somewhat water-resistant cover (although still made of paper) that has large flaps to help bookmark pages. A regional map is provided in the introduction. The cover has a striking photographic-like drawing of a tiger's face, which hints at the region and compels the book to be picked up and browsed. I would recommend this book to all school children so that they can see that iconic animals come from somewhere outside the usually suspected places. I also recommend it to university libraries as a browsing book and most importantly to the residents and researchers of the south Asian region.

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References

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