

Book review

BIRDS OF THAILAND

By U. Treesucon and W. Limparungpatthanakij

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This is a field guide covering the country of Thailand. It stops at the political borders with its neighbours Myanmar to the north and west, Malaysia to the south, Laos to the east and Cambodia to the south-west. It aims to cover the assemblage of bird species within its borders in a succinct manner.

It is intrinsically a field guide. Like other field guides in the Lynx and BirdLife International series this is structured with a basic introduction, in which you will find large and small paragraphs on; geographic scope, climate and generalised habitats. These are followed by points quickly outlining conservation threats and status. Four and a half pages are then devoted to generalised birding and hotspots. Most of the book is then given to species accounts. The maps, figures and other sundry metrics are of a high quality and appear to be taken from *HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World* (del Hoyo and Collar 2014–2016). Following the species accounts there is a short one-page reference section followed by indexes, one of which is in Thai. The book is in English. Lynx's homepage for the book indicated that 1049 species might be dealt with including 20 endemics. There are QR codes (Quick Response Codes) for each species, which allow devices, such as mobile phones, to link to the Lynx's *Internet Bird Collection* webpages.

This book addresses a local tourist audience—local to Asia and local to Thailand. Thailand is a popular tourist destination for people from Asian and Western countries. Thus, it was essential that it be written in English rather than Thai, although there is an index in Thai. Despite all the English, this guide will still prove useful for Thai residents and facilitate local research.

Perhaps having the index of Thai names, which are repeated through the species accounts will help.

This book is attempting to be a dedicated field guide for Thailand. Yet since Thailand has few endemic birds it will also be useful in identifying birds from its South-east Asian neighbours. As a field guide it succeeds by being intentionally brief, but fails by being too big to fit into your pocket. Yet, as I say this I am aware that most field guides are presented this way. Basically the layout follows the Lynx and BirdLife International series of guides. The text of the species accounts is well organised and sufficient, giving the birds' names (in English and Thai), conservation status (global and Thai, though Thai status is often NE meaning not evaluated), measurements, subspecies with distributions, plumage and other identification characteristics, voices and similar species. Numbers of extant species are given at the start of each family. The pictures and maps on the right facing pages are of high quality, they are quickly readable and diagnostically useful for purpose.

What educational, research or professional functions might the text fulfil? It will play a role in the quick identification of the birds for educational and research functions. However, it is a field guide. In that sense it is entirely fit for purpose: sufficient and pertinent (except not fitting into my pocket).

The writing style is clear and succinct as was intended. Alas, I could find no information on breeding periods. I suspect this is omitted for reasons of space. Yet, short crisp notes on breeding would have made it a more useful field guide. Breeding plumage and nests being things that bird observers would want to know more about.

I would recommend this book to those travelling to Thailand or neighbouring countries. It will surely be useful for those birdwatchers and students of ornithology in Thailand provided that they can read English.

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Reference

del Hoyo, J., and Collar, N. J. (2014–2016). 'HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World.' Volumes 1 & 2. (Lynx Edicions: Barcelona.)