

## Book review

### ILLUSTRATED CHECKLIST OF THE MAMMALS OF THE WORLD

By Burgin, C. J., Wilson, D. E., Mittermeier, R. A., Rylands, A. B., Lacher, T. E. and Sechrest, W. (Eds). Illustrated by Llobet, T. (main artist)

2020. Published by Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. 1166 pp. 6.4 kg Hardback, €210 (AU\$350.00), ISBN 978-84-16728-36-7 (2 Volume Set)

The Editors of these two volumes are drawn from prominent scientific institutions based in the USA: Mr Connor Burgin from The University of New Mexico, Dr Don Wilson from the Smithsonian, Dr Russell Mittermeier from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Professor Anthony Rylands and Wes Sechrest (Chief Scientist) from the Global Wildlife Conservation and Professor Thomas Lacher from Texas A&M University. The collection of illustrators are all experienced wildlife artists with a more international background coming from Spain, South Africa, Bulgaria and the UK. They were led by Toni Llobet from Barcelona.

This two volume set presents all the mammals of the world fully illustrated with facing pages of text, which are largely devoted to their taxonomy and distributions. It also stands as a complete, summary of the current taxonomy and distribution of every currently recognised species of mammal. The aim of this two volume set is to collect all the mammals into one place while updating them into the latest taxonomy and understanding. Thereby making these volumes useful to academics, researchers and various conservation professionals, in addition to the legions of consumers who want to own and explore big books on mammals.

The layout of the two volumes is conventional if indeed a first of its kind can be conventional. The contents is organised in phylogenetic order following Order, Family and Subfamily – Volume 1 takes us from Monotremata to Rodentia and Volume 2 from Eulipotyphla to Carnivora. Overall, this encompasses 27 orders, 167 families, 1343 genera and 6554 species (104 extinct and 19 domesticated). There are a little more than 10 pages of references in the bibliography followed by a comprehensive index. Since this is sold as a set the index is in Volume 2. The bulk of each volume is taken up with the species accounts with illustrations on the right and text on the left, facing pages. There is also a useful and instructive introduction in Volume 1. This begins by giving some history of keeping and classifying mammals, by highlighting anecdotes of mammalogist Oldfield Thomas and The British Natural History Museum, before developing numerous taxonomic concepts in an easy to understand manner: para-, poly- and monophyly made easy. The taxonomic content of these volumes has been taken seriously by the editors.

The audience being addressed is twofold, both general and academic readers are being targeted with the degree of taxonomic information given and the quality of the illustrations and maps. Taxa are given down to subspecies with distributions and IUCN status. Colour coding is used throughout to help make data quickly accessible and the illustrations, although varying in scale and size of presentation, are given scale bars to help identify their sizes. Each species account is linked by volume and page number to the Handbook of Mammals of the World: 9-volume series (Wilson and Mittermeier 2009–2020), which facilitates quickly finding more information on that species if desired (and depending on you having those volumes handy).

A clear strength of these volumes is the serious taxonomic effort put into the work. The taxonomy is up-to-date at the time of publication. The quality of illustrations advances the book as does its introduction acting as a short course in taxonomic matters. The text will undoubtedly advance the discipline of mammalogy through its academic rigour and in enthusing people by putting all the mammals in one place. It may be a first stopping point to check species nomenclature. These volumes are suitable for children and academics. My 7-year-old daughter delighted in learning that there were three species of giraffe and even more subspecies while I pondered the numerous numbers of Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* subspecies: there are 45!

There are 845 references cited in the bibliography, which reflects the detail seen throughout. All of that detail is highly accessible being well laid out, colour highlighted and in bold font when required, and all in a concise, clear and familiar style. However, despite this I so often wanted the font to be larger, particularly when in Latin and associated with the illustrations.

In terms of supplementary material the introduction stands out and many of the illustrations are variant in size making their appearance far more aesthetically pleasing, which I suggest will encourage the readers to pick the volumes up more often. The covers of each volume have a stylised taxonomic tree with mammal pictures that relate to the mammals in that volume; in itself I found this to be a quick and useful contents page.

I would recommend this two volume set broadly, to: children, families, and students, libraries (school, public and universities) and to academics. Its taxonomic information, high quality illustrations and maps, along with its easily understood layout make it informative and useful on all the above-mentioned levels.

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#### Reference

Wilson, D. E., and Mittermeier, R. A. (Eds) (2009–2020). 'Handbook of the Mammals of the World. Vols 1–9'. (Lynx Edicions: Barcelona.)