
Books

PHEASANTS, PARTRIDGES, AND GROUSE [:] A GUIDE TO THE PHEASANTS, PARTRIDGES, QUAILS, GROUSE, GUINEAFOWL, BUTTONQUAILS, AND SANDGROUSE OF THE WORLD. By Steve Madge and Phil McGowan with Guy M. Kirwan. 2002. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, and Oxford, UK. 488 pp. \$49.50.

In this age of exponential growth of interest in birds, both field guides and treatises on various groups of birds have proliferated. The present volume is an excellent example of a relatively new style of book in which a condensed field guide section is followed by a longer, handbook-style section. As suggested by the title, this book is a world-wide overview of most of the gallinaceous birds and some unrelated birds that look similar to them. Galliformes included are those of the families Phasianidae (pheasants, partridges, Old World quails, spurfowl and peafowl), Numididae (guineafowl), Meleagrididae (turkeys), Tetraonidae (grouse) and Odontophoridae (New World quails). Galliformes excluded are the Cracidae (guans, chachalacas and curassows) and Megapodiidae (megapodes, scrubfowl and brush-turkeys). Non-gallinaceous look-alikes included are buttonquails (a family from the order Gruiformes), the Plains-wanderer (*Pedionomus torquatus*) of the monotypic Pedionomidae within the order Charadriiformes and sandgrouse, here treated as a separate order, Pterocliiformes, in the table of contents but as a family within the Charadriiformes (p. 442) in the text.

The book begins with a few brief introductory sections (contents, preface, "systematic list of species" [essentially a detailed table of contents], acknowledgements, introduction, style and layout, topography [using a drawing of a Red Junglefowl to illustrate most features and heads and necks of a Helmeted Guineafowl and a grouse to illustrate some others], and a two-page glossary. These are followed by 74 color plates, each with a facing page outlining key features useful in distinguishing among species, races, sexes, ages and/or seasonal plumages—essentially a field guide. The bulk of the book (pp. 171-462) follows, with more detailed accounts of each species and short

introductory blurbs on each family, genus, and sub-genus. A 12-page "bibliography" and an index conclude the volume.

Most species accounts are slightly less or slightly more than one page long. The shortest account is the one-paragraph account of the Double-breasted Argus (*Argusianus bipunctatus*) known to date only from a "portion of a single primary feather!" The longest account is that of the Common [our Ring-necked] Pheasant, running to almost four pages, although Willow Ptarmigan receives two species accounts, one labelled "Willow Grouse *Lagopus (lagopus) lagopus*" [actually including 17 described races], the other "Red Grouse *Lagopus (lagopus) scoticus*." As indicated in the previous sentence, species names used in headings are those used in Europe if the species occurs there, but alternate names are indicated clearly. Species accounts are remarkably thorough, given their brief lengths, with most containing information on identification features, descriptions of variants [by age, sex, described races, clinal differences, and known or suspected hybrids], measurements, habitat notes, voice, "habits," breeding details, distribution, status (current and often previously), and references. These accounts are remarkably detailed, given their limited length and the fact that some of the domesticated and hunted species have had numerous full-length books written about them. The number of references ranges from one (Ruffed Grouse! and Gunnison's Prairie-Chicken) to about ten (usually about three to six), with citations for better known species limited primarily to comprehensive treatises that list other references, and more obscure references often listed for poorly known species.

The aspect of this book of most direct use to banders is the level of detail included on plumage variation. In addition to the usual differences between or among different age, sex, or seasonal categories, descriptions, often detailed, are provided for various races, other geographical variants and numerous hybrids or presumed hybrids. The authors also point out disagreements among authorities as to the amount and/or significance of such variations. Ranges in

measurements (often differentiated as to sex) are also listed for overall length, wing, tarsus, and "weight" (mass).

Most volumes covering all species in a particular family or order of birds are of interest primarily to "birders" who can afford to travel extensively and to researchers who focus on comparative studies on some particular aspect of behavior, ecology, life history, or morphology of a defined group of birds. However, as many species of waterfowl and gallinaceous birds have been introduced into regions far removed from their native ranges, worldwide treatises on them can be useful for sorting out mystery birds that suddenly appear on one's study area. The authors of this volume appear to have been especially thorough in including introduced populations within the ranges of each species, including not only widespread introductions (such as Gray Partridge, Chukar, and Ring-necked Pheasants in North America), but also numerous much more localized populations, such as Himalayan Snowcock in Nevada, the now probably extirpated Vancouver Island population of Mountain Quail, Green Pheasants in Delaware, Virginia, and the main island of Hawaii, and Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse in Hawaii and Nevada. I checked for several obscure or localized introductions, and found most listed, although the extirpated introduced Alberta population of Northern Bobwhite and British Columbia and Manitoba populations of Wild Turkey were missing.

Although not usually mentioned specifically, many of the life history details included were determined at least partially through banding or otherwise marking individual birds. Examples cited specifically are that radio-tagging of Verreaux's Monal-Partridges has documented movements from 2850 m in elevation in spring to 3000-3500 m in summer, that banding recoveries have shown that Stubble Quail in Australia disperse in all directions with 1142 km the longest distance documented to date, that limited radio-tagging of Black-breasted Buttonquail indicates that they are "principally sedentary" in spite of local irruptions, and that radio-tracking and banding of plains-wanderers demonstrate strong site fidelity under "normal circumstances."

A book covering such a wide array of species, many of which have been studied thoroughly in

several areas, would be expected to contain several over generalizations if not errors, but I was able to locate few errors of fact and was impressed with the careful delineation of uncertainties and variations between areas. Researchers of each species will no doubt notice minor errors or exceptions to generalized statements, but the authors have been remarkably thorough. The definition of "altitudinal migrant" (p. 23) as a "montane species which habitually moves to considerably lower elevations in winter" would exclude Blue Grouse, which exhibits the opposite pattern. Apart from split infinitives and some run-on words, grammatical errors are also sparse. On the whole, proof-reading appears to have been thorough with few "typos" and incorrect cross references. For example, all cross references between plates and main text appear to be correct except for one that is only one page off—the text for Blyth's Tragopan starts on p. 284, not 283 as indicated on the caption to plate 32 (p. 88). The only major proof-reading flaw is in the references. Numerous references cited are not in the "bibliography" at the end of the book and the dates of several others vary between the text and the bibliography. In several instances, the editor(s) of a particular book are cited in a species account, but the source is listed under the individual author. As the comprehensiveness of this volume is likely to lead to a demand for a revision in a few years, I hope that the publisher and authors make the revision even more useful by ensuring that all references cited are included in the bibliography. This one major flaw aside, this is a remarkably thorough summary of what is known to date about the species covered and should be of considerable help to numerous banders, birders, "game bird managers," and research ornithologists alike.

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