

What an extraordinarily diverse group of birds! This magnificent book provides a panoramic yet penetrating overview of the reed warbler's intriguing biology. Scholarly, yet readable and beautifully produced. A model of natural history writing and publishing.

Tim Birkhead,
Professor of Behavioural Ecology, FRS
University of Sheffield.

An outstanding and comprehensive book on an engrossing group of songbirds. It deserves not only a specialist readership but should also appeal to any general naturalist.

Professor Franz Bairlein,
Director Institute of Avian Research,
Wilhelmshaven, Germany,
President International Ornithologists' Union.

The authors have studied reed warblers for forty five years. In this compelling book they celebrate the fifty three species of the family Acrocephalidae by taking us on a remarkable journey: across the breeding grounds in the wetlands, woodlands and mountains of Eurasia, down to the wintering sites in Africa and southern Asia, then out to remote oceanic islands in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian oceans. This is a thrilling intellectual journey, too. Few families provide models for such a range of biological problems: speciation, migration, song, sexual selection, mating systems, cooperative breeding, cuckoo-host coevolution, and evolution in a changing world. Illustrated with superb photographs and beautiful drawings by David Quinn, this book reveals that 'little brown jobs' can be the real treasures of the bird world.

Nick Davies,
Professor of Behavioural Ecology, FRS,
University of Cambridge.

Anyone who has experienced the sights and sounds of a rustling reedbed will find themselves captivated by this beautifully-produced and richly illustrated volume. Although acrocephalid warblers are phenotypically uniform, this closer look at many decades of detailed research reveals a fascinating spectrum of diversity in their life strategies. Members of the family may be regarded as the 'laboratory mice' of avian biological and lifestyle studies. Many of these have resulted in outstanding pioneering findings for the whole of ornithology and set new standards in behavioural and molecular ecology. Questions revolving around phylogeny and environment run like a thread throughout this book. Here lie absorbing insights into a range of topical concerns, such as systematic relationships, hybridization and speciation, ecomorphology and behaviour, phenotypic plasticity, population dynamics and conservation issues.

The authors rise to the challenge of determining whether the similarity of species in a particular trait can be derived from their close relationship or from their comparable ecology. In so doing, they consider diet, foraging and habitat use, competition and co-existence, communication and sexual selection, reproductive success, the evolution of social and genetic mating systems and differing forms of parental care.

Further chapters are devoted to brood parasites and hosts, avian dispersal and moult, the colonization of oceanic islands, inbreeding and immune systems, morphological and behavioural convergence. With more than 40 years of field, laboratory, and museum experience, the authors are uniquely placed to engage us with the 'little brown birds' we know as reed warblers, and how they exemplify some of the key topics in 21st century ornithology.

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