

Foreword

by

Richard Howard

It is some twenty-five years since work began on the first edition of this book. The late Alick Moore deserves much of the credit for that, and more than half the credit for the second edition. He and I were perhaps lucky to recognise the appeal of a compact list of the world's birds that included subspecies. Our effort was the first such book, and for twenty years the only such list.

It would never have been possible without the tremendously valuable and important groundwork that created a *Check-list of Birds of the World* by J.L. Peters and others. The first edition of 'Howard & Moore' (1980) appeared before volume 11 of 'Peters' in 1986, and by 1979 some volumes of 'Peters' had been in print for over 40 years. In consequence, Alick's work on the passerines involved areas that had not yet been covered and my work on the non-passerines required the updating of much that had been done many years earlier. In our second edition (1991), complemented in 1994 by an Appendix, the focus was on bringing in the additions and changes from the recent literature. Alick happily oversaw this process.

Based on a wealth of feedback, this third edition is essentially a new work; made easier to achieve perhaps by the existence of our foundation work, but nonetheless entirely revised throughout. The main driver of change is that birdwatchers have become serious about their birds. A list that does not explain in depth will not begin to satisfy the raft of intelligent questions that readers ask. Also, as the years pass, Peters Check-list is more and more in need of a supplement: one that treats essentially every new name proposed since each of its volumes, and provides a full reference to both these and to most of the many recent revisions. This revised edition sets out to achieve these objectives.

Some five years ago I asked Edward Dickinson for his advice. Realising that the recommendations that he made corresponded to what users of 'Howard & Moore' would now expect, I was delighted to accept his proposal that the revision be far-reaching and organised on a collaborative basis with five regional consultants: one each for the Americas, Africa, Asia, Australasia and the Palearctic. This has led to far wider consultation and has resulted in a very thorough revision that goes far beyond simple updating and the correction of the errors and omissions of the last edition. Incidentally, our readers pointed out a good few of these errors and I am most grateful to them.

The introductory section will offer a perspective on the reasons for these changes and explain in detail the revised structure of the book, the extra content and the new features.

I hope that birdwatchers and ornithologists will continue to demand regular updates of this book. Part of the royalties from this and future editions will not be distributed, but used to help finance the vital literature surveillance as an on-going process rather than a search over a number of past years. We also intend to keep a team in place that will contribute on a regular basis and then later engage on a focused revision.

Field identification is particularly difficult and we have largely ignored vagrancy details. Introduced species create a problem for a list like this and we have largely ignored ranges, except in well-established cases.

In a first stage of our revision a compiler entered most of the authors' names and dates and, based on a literature search, proposed various revisions. A primary objective of this exercise was to provide the regional consultants with a more manageable task.