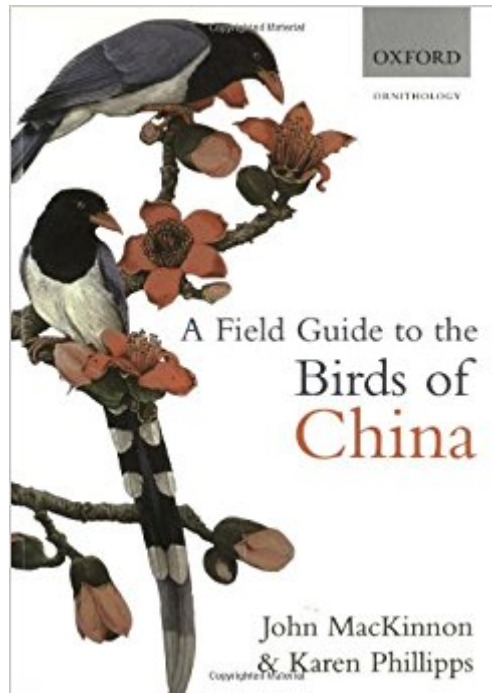


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A Field Guide To The Birds Of China



Synopsis

China is one of the largest countries in the world, covering 7% of the earth's land surface, and encompassing a hugely diverse range of habitats. As a result it boasts a rich and diverse avifauna, including some of the most spectacular and fascinating birds to be found anywhere in the world. John MacKinnon and Karen Phillipps' important new guide will be the first truly comprehensive, taxonomically modern, and fully illustrated field guide to the birds of China. Over 1300 bird species are illustrated in 128 original colour paintings, by Karen Phillipps and Dave Showler. The species accounts stress the key points for field recognition and give a full description of the plumage, voice, range, distribution, status, and behavioral characteristics for every bird, with additional descriptions provided for hundreds of subspecies. Colour distribution maps are provided for all illustrated species. The book also includes a useful introductory section that presents a background to the ecology of China, a brief history of Chinese ornithology, and plenty of practical hints on birdwatching in China. The guide's portable format means it will fit easily into a backpack or pocket. John MacKinnon lived in China and Hong Kong for eight years, and has extensive experience of watching and writing about Chinese birds. He has been working in ecology and conservation in Asia for over 30 years, and his work in China included co-authoring the master plan to save the Giant Panda and its habitat. He has written and co-authored many books on the natural history of Asia, including a number of other bird guides. Karen Phillipps was born in Borneo, lived in Hong Kong for over 20 years, and has illustrated several other books on the birdlife of the region.

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Customer Reviews

"This field guide has been long awaited by the growing number of birders visiting China. By including in one volume all the species--complete with distribution maps--recorded in this vast country, it represents a huge step forward. It is the first complete, taxonomically up-to-date and fully illustrated guide to the birds of China published in English ... The initial chapters include an introduction to the region, with a revealing section on birds in the local economy and culture. ... Next come the 128 all-important colour plates, which have distribution maps opposite--an arrangement which I like. ... The species accounts cover nomenclature, descriptions, voice, range (global), distribution and status (within region) and habits, and occupy 500 pages. Finally, there are appendices which include lists of endangered and protected species, and endemic and limited-distribution species. ... This book is a major achievement and an invaluable conservation tool."--Birdwatch

"This field guide is a great step forward and essential for anyone with an interest in China's birds. For the first time, in any language, all China's 1329 species are described and illustrated in one book and despite containing more than 500 pages its A5 size makes it compact enough for easy field use. The layout is well thought out...it is easy to identify which similar species should be present in a particular region of China. It is well worth the price of the book just to have all species illustrated accurately. Overall a good quality field guide that I would not be without." -- Ross MacLeod, British Ornithologists' Union, Vol 143, 2001

John MacKinnon is Professor of Biodiversity Information at the Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology at the University of Kent in Canterbury, England. He is currently posted in the Philippines as head of a European Union project to set up an ASEAN Regional Centre for Biodiversity Conservation. He is Chairman of a Special Biodiversity Working Group that advises the Chinese Government on biodiversity matters, and formerly spent eight years living in China and Hong Kong working on a number of conservation projects in China. Apart from many technical reports on China he has published two other books on the country - Wild China and A Photoguide to the Birds of China. Among several other books on natural history of Asia, he is also the senior author of A Field Guide to the Birds of Borneo, Sumatra, Java and Bali which remains the standard bird guide to the Greater Sunda Islands.

We have birded in 4 continents. This book ranks among the best birding guide books. The illustration is accurate, and is reliable for identifying birds. It is the only comprehensive field guide for China, covering 1300+ bird species. The organization of this book is very good, actually better than the field

guide for the US (such as Sibley and Nat Geo) and Europe. It has two sections: 1) 128 color plates: map (on the left) and illustration (on the right). It is much easier to brow through the 128 plates than the entire book to find the bird. 2) Content (description, voice, range, distribution and status, habits) follows after the color plates. The content is very helpful when one is in doubt about the ID. Each specie is numbered from 1 to 1329. It gives two advantages: 1) I only needed to write down the number in the field instead of the bird name. That saved a lot of time; 2) It is very easy to locate the specie in the color plates or content section. The book also gives the Chinese name of each specie, which can be helpful if you are bilingual. In short, it is a great field guide, indispensable for birding in China.

I visit Taiwan at least once a year, and always make it a point to do as much birding as possible. The main problem I have faced in the past has been finding a good English language field guide. I have always used James Wan-Fu Chang's "Field Guide to the Birds of Taiwan" (ISBN-13: 978-0917056437), and Wu Sen-Hsiong's "A Field Guide to the Birds of Taiwan" (ISBN 957-9578-00-1). Both books are very good, and highly recommended. However, each has its drawbacks. The main one being that both are written in Chinese, although Chang's guide does have very brief descriptions of range, habitat and status in English. In addition, both books are a bit out-dated. The MacKinnon & Phillips guide addresses these drawbacks. For starters, it is written entirely in English. The paintings are generally of high quality, and differences between subspecies are indicated. Range maps are also shown on the page facing the paintings. The descriptions of many (but not all) species are fairly well detailed, and the ranges for subspecies is also described. The guide does have some minor problems, which are probably unavoidable. Because of the large geographical size of the area covered, and the number of species described (over 1300), the guide is quite bulky - and somewhat expensive. In addition, the descriptions are in the back of the guide, rather than on the page adjacent to the paintings, making it somewhat inconvenient to use. As I have alluded above, some of the species descriptions, particularly those of the Taiwan endemics, seemed to have been glossed over (perhaps to save space in an already sizable guide). And although most of the paintings are of high quality, not all were. Overall, I think they are slightly inferior to those of the Wu guide. That being said, no field guide is perfect. Putting a field guide together requires a lot of patience and a great deal of hard work. I, for one, really appreciate the dedication and effort of the authors. All in all, this is the best field guide to the birds of China available. I would highly recommend this guide.

We got it for an upcoming trip to China and are putting page numbers on the plate pages that correspond with the information pages and vice versa so it will be easier to use. Which they had one a little more user friendly or more like the ones we use for North American birds

Workable field guide although I found a lot of the pictures leave a lot to be desired as far as accuracy. I had a series of photos of a small flock of finches that I tried to identify and when I finally found the correct bird, the drawing was marginal at best. Other than that, it does a good job. It could use a map with provincial borders

This is probably the most comprehensive and best guide to the birds of China. But it is not as good as field guides to some other countries. It does not point out differentiating characteristics that can be seen on the plates, and it's quite heavy for a field guide (perhaps inevitable in a country as big as China with so many species).

Very useful, hope we get an update soon

This rare book by international environmental expert John Mackinnon is still the best field guide available for birders interested in China. So glad has copies available.

Finding any book in English on Birds of China is a nightmare so I was even more delighted at the quality, presentation, ease of use and comprehensive coverage of this book. It really is an absolute must for anyone in China trying to identify, in detail, the bird life there.

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