

BOOK REVIEWS

Parrots brings together more identification information in a single volume than has previously been available for this fascinating group. It will be especially useful to those who travel to parrot-rich regions currently lacking good field guides (e.g., much of South America), as well as those who live in parts of California, Florida, and Texas. The book's shortcomings presumably reflect a haste to bring it into print in the competitive world of identification guides; many could have been rectified by stronger regional review and greater use of museum specimens by some of the artists. North Americans who are not parrot aficionados and do not plan to travel to areas of high parrot diversity should be aware that the identification of naturalized parrot populations in North America will be made easier by greatly expanded coverage in the 3rd edition of the National Geographic Society field guide and in David Sibley's forthcoming North American identification guide.

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Shrikes: A Guide to the Shrikes of the World, by Norbert Lefranc, illustrated by Tim Worfolk. 1997. Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, CT. 192 pages, 16 color plates, 75 black-and-white figures. Hardback, \$35.00. ISBN 0-300-07336-4.

Shrikes follows the familiar format of the Pica/Yale family guides, with brief introductory sections (discussing taxonomy and an overview of genera covered), color plates with short facing-page texts, and species accounts (which include range maps). Despite its title, this book covers only 31 of the world's 75+ shrike species (the principal omission is the bush-shrikes, subfamily Malaconotinae). The author suggests that the three genera covered (*Lanius*, *Corvinella*, *Eurocephalus*) are the "true shrikes," but this classification, based on DNA-hybridization studies, is rather weak, and this book cannot claim to be a comprehensive monograph of the shrikes.

In general, the text is informative, but there is less emphasis on identification than most readers would probably expect, and I found the taxonomic approach frustratingly inconsistent. One recently proposed split is followed, the separation of the Southern Gray Shrike (*L. meridionalis*) from the Great Grey (= Northern) Shrike (*L. excubitor*), while the Red-tailed Shrike (*L. phoenicuroides*) is left within *isabellinus*, despite published evidence for its specific status (partly from the same researcher who suggested the *meridionalis* split!), evidence that even Lefranc admits should "be taken seriously" (p. 14). For the subspecific taxonomy of the Northern Shrike, only weak justification is given for ignoring the conclusion of Phillips (1986; *The Known Birds of North and Middle America*, part 1) that *invictus* should be synonymized with *borealis*, suggesting the author may not appreciate variation in nearctic populations. While the Northern Shrike of North America shows affinities with the eastern palearctic *sibiricus*, the text stresses similarities, omits some significant differences (e.g., the pattern of the outer rectrix), and makes no mention of the possibility that the Northern Shrike may be a distinct species (as has been suggested recently for a number of trans-Beringian avian taxa).

The plates are good if somewhat "flat," but too few non-adult plumages are illustrated, especially where they would be most valuable for identification (e.g., in the *cristatus-collurio-isabellinus* complex). The distribution maps are excellent for palearctic taxa but markedly less detailed for afrotropical species and the Loggerhead Shrike.

This book partially fills an obvious niche in the ornithological literature and will be required reading for shrike enthusiasts, but it does little to dispel suspicion that many avian monographs are increasingly Eurocentric and of decreasing value in terms of species (and content) per dollar.

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