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Books

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Froehlich uses the Humphrey-Parkes (H-P) molt terminology, as does Pyle. The two books are thus fully compatible. Steven N. G. Howell et al. recently proposed a revision to this terminology wherein the prejuvenal molt is equivalent to the first prebasic molt and the presupplemental and first prebasic molts of H-P are called formative molts. If this revision is adopted, as I expect it will be in Pyle's part II, there is considerable potential for confusion among inexperienced banders attempting to use Pyle and/or Froehlich. I hope that both books will be revised accordingly. Jenni and Winkler, adding to the confusion, used yet another terminology!

Any bander at all uncertain of the principles and practice of determining age of birds by plumage, or intimidated by Pyle, will benefit from Froehlich's book. The book also should be required reading in every bander training program. If I could make reading Froehlich a prerequisite for purchasing Pyle, I would!

Froehlich's book can be purchased by check or money order for \$15.00 plus postage (\$3.50 to U.S. destinations, \$5.00 elsewhere) from Slate Creek Press, Box 219, Bolinas, CA 94970. Readers with Internet access can find further ordering information at <http://www.birdpop.org>.

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A PHOTOGRAPHIC GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA, INCLUDING THE PHILIPPINES & BORNEO. By Morten Strange. 2000. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. 398 pp., 700+ photographs. Soft cover. \$29.95.

This book on southeastern Asian birds was the brain child of Eric Oey, the C.E.O. of Periplus Editions (H.K.) Ltd. The idea was to publish a photographic book, as complete as possible, on the birds of southeastern Asia and Indoneasia in guide book format. It would comprise part of a series of *Periplus Nature Guides* on that region. Professional bird photographer Morten Strange agreed to author the book. The area covered is

said to be "...the birds of mainland southeast Asia, the Philippines and Borneo, including peninsular Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Indochina, South China, Hong Kong and Taiwan." The rest of Indonesia is not included. Although the original concept was for the book to be "as complete as possible," practicality dictated that it mainly features "easy-to-see" species. It is intended for "birders" and has no other relevance to bird banding.

The book is handy field-guide size (13 cm. x 19 cm.). There are two pages of Acknowledgements, 12 pages of thorough Introduction, dealing with The Joy of Birdwatching, Birding Techniques, Habitats, The Bird Year, Places to Go and Conservation which includes a list of endemics. Taiwan now has 15 endemics, up from 14 since this book was published. This introductory section is one of the best that I have come across. The "How to Use This Book" section includes Area Covered (see above), Nomenclature, Taxonomy and Sequence (as in *A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia* by King, Dickinson and Woodcock, 1975¹, with small adjustments), Family and Genus, Photographs, Bird Topography, Voice, Habits, Distribution and Status, Abundance Code and Globally Threatened Status. The back of the book includes a useful Glossary, Selected Bibliography and a small Further Information section listing details on Oriental Bird Club, Birdlife International and Nature's Niche Pte., Ltd., a book store in Singapore.

There are 668 species covered as listed in the Index of Scientific Names, with a distribution map for each. In the Index of Common Names, the species count is slightly misleading, as some are double entries (e.g., "Flyeater" = "Golden-bellied Gerygone"). The description on the back cover reads "...more than 700 brilliant color photographs..." I counted 736.

Approximately 60% of the photographs are by Morten Strange; the remaining 40% were by 11 other photographers. Most of the photographs are of high quality. Having dabbled in bird photography myself, I appreciate how difficult it must have been to get some of the shots. However, field guides based on photographs instead of drawings have obvious limitations. As any bird photographer

knows, some subjects are more cooperative than others, and some are extremely difficult; also photographic equipment and techniques vary. The book is not intended as a "stand alone" field guide, but rather as a supplement to field guides that use drawings. Plumage descriptions are limited to a sentence or two. The author states: "The birds in the photos appear exactly as you will encounter them with no artistic adjustments." Perhaps. For the vast majority of species covered, there is only one photograph. In most species with sexual dimorphism, the more colorful sex is shown, with the less colorful described very briefly. Immatures are also described only briefly. Resident birds are shown in breeding plumage, while migrants are shown in non-breeding plumage. Some other useful information is omitted entirely.

Some specific causes for concern are:

p. 53: Malayan Night-Heron *Gorsachius melanolophus*: Only the immature is shown. The text says that this species is "vagrant in Taiwan..." This is incorrect. The species is present in Taiwan all year in small numbers in the botanical gardens in Taipei, the Chaoyi Agricultural Experimental Station, and suitable habitat elsewhere. The Japanese Night-Heron, which may be confused with the Malayan, is omitted entirely. The Japanese Night-Heron occasionally reaches the Chinese mainland and Taiwan.

p. 82: Rufous-bellied Eagle *Hieraaetus kieneri* is so dark in this photograph that it is difficult to see the field marks described.

p. 113: Nordmann's Greenshank [Spotted Greenshank] *Tringa guttifer*. There are only a few records from Taiwan in spite of the indication on the wintering range map.²

p. 182: Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata* is shown on the distribution map as breeding in Taiwan with no qualifying text, making it appear as common a breeder as Common Kingfisher, whereas it is in fact extremely rare there.²

p. 226: Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* is shown as breeding in Taiwan. The text reads: "A wide-spread and locally common

resident through the region; migrant only in Hong Kong, Singapore and Borneo, including Brunei." This book treats Striated Swallow *Hirundo striolata* as a subspecies of Red-rumped. Other authors treat Red-rumped Swallow as only migrant through Taiwan and Striated Swallow as a resident species.

p. 252: Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus* is shown as breeding in Taiwan. This is apparently incorrect; confusion may have arisen because some authors indicate that subspecies *D. h. brevirostris* breeds in central and eastern China and Taiwan. According to Clements, none of the subspecies of *D. hottentottus* breed in Taiwan, where it is considered extremely rare.²

p. 281: Mountain Morrison Laughingthrush *Garrulax morrisonianus*. Clements users would have a difficult time with that English name! It is better known as White-whiskered Laughingthrush.

p. 287: Formosan Barwing [Taiwan Barwing] *Actinodura morrisoniana*. The photo is partly overexposed and not helpful.

p. 291: Grey-cheeked Fulvetta *Alcippe morrisonia*. The photo is overexposed. There is little to distinguish it from Mountain Fulvetta on the facing page.

p. 295: Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*. The photo is overexposed. This species is rare in Taiwan in winter.²

p. 295: Siberian Blue Robin *Luscinia cyane*. The photo is of a rather drab female. This species is only a vagrant in Taiwan in winter.²

p. 307: Island Thrush *Turdus poliocephalus* is a wide-ranging species with 50 subspecies, according to Clements (pp. 418-419). The subspecies shown in the photograph is not named.

p. 312: White-tailed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus davisoni*. The photo is overexposed. The identification features are yellow wash in grayish supercilium and underparts, but I don't see a yellowish wash in the photo.

p. 320: Bright-capped Cisticola [Golden-headed Cisticola] *Cisticola exilis*. Which subspecies is this? Again, we are not told. It is certainly not the Taiwan suspecies, which has a very pale head.

p. 343: Tiger Shrike *Lanius tigrinus*. This species is a vagrant in Taiwan.²

p. 374: Brown Bullfinch *Pyrrhula nipalensis*. Birders would have some difficulty identifying Brown Bullfinch from this photograph, as it appears to have a white ruff. Which subspecies is this?

This book attempts to cover a very large geographic area. Not surprisingly, the author and photographers have concentrated on the areas of coverage that they know best, and are birded most heavily. Unfortunately, Taiwan was given short shrift. As some bird species have many subspecies, it would be helpful to know where and when the photos were taken. In some of the photographs, the bird is back-lit, making the details difficult or impossible to see, as exemplified by the Brown Shrike on p. 342. In the field, of course, some birds are back-lit, or observed briefly in a posture not usually seen, such as shown by the Long-tailed Shrike on p. 344. The flight silhouettes of the swifts on pp. 170-173 are good; however, under field conditions, the details shown may be almost impossible to see.

The book purports to concentrate on easy-to-see species, but I am mystified by some of the choices. For example, in the Mt. Kinabalu area, I wonder why Whitehead's Trogon is included, but Whitehead's Spiderhunter is not, as in my experience the trogon is harder to find than the spiderhunter. Nordmann's Greenshank [Spotted Greenshank] is coded as rare and globally threatened, but Black-faced Spoonbill, also globally threatened, is omitted. At the time of writing, Feb 2004, 50 to 60% of the World population of Black-faced Spoonbill is wintering, as usual, in the Tsengwen River estuary of Taiwan. Confusingly, "spoonbill" in the index took me to p. 57, Painted Stork and Asian Openbill.

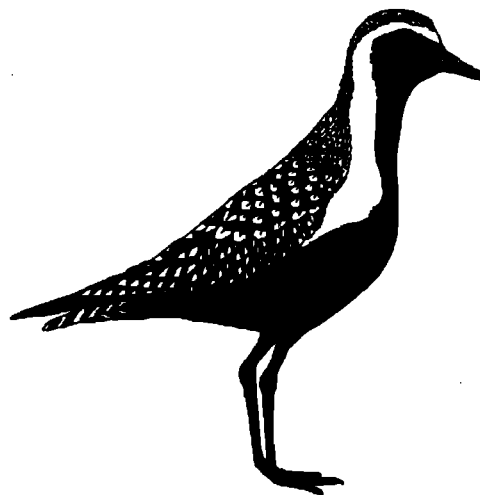
Does the book succeed? Is it useful? Yes, with some reservations as noted above. This book is interesting to browse through, but its usefulness in

the field would be limited. If you have room in your luggage, take it with you to southeastern Asia, but do not rely on it as your sole field guide. If your destination is Taiwan only, leave this book at home.

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¹ Users of *Birds of the World: a Checklist* by Clements (2000 and subsequent updates) will have difficulty with the nomenclature of King *et al.*

² I thank Simon Liao for helpful comments on the status in Taiwan of Nordmann's Greenshank, Black-capped Kingfisher, Spangled Drongo, Siberian Rubythroat, Siberian Blue Robin and Tiger Shrike.



American Golden-Plover
by George West