

on the shelf

Africa's birds occur in East Africa, it became a standard part of most birders' field library throughout much of the continent.

The release of a new edition, 18 years later, is thus a red letter event. Not content to wait for a hard copy to eventually wend its way from the UK, I accepted a digital proof for this review. I thus can't comment on the robustness of the new edition; this review is based on a pdf of the 640 pages that make up the body of the book.

The second edition covers 1448 species, 60 more than the original. Seventeen are treated in a section on vagrants at the end of the main species text. Interestingly, not all of these vagrants are new records since the first edition was published. For example, the sole East African record of Christmas Frigatebird dates back to 1969, but was not mentioned in the first edition. A few species have been moved to this section from the main text (for example, Demoiselle Crane and Black-naped Tern).

The book retains the same species sequence as the first edition and most of the plates are identical, apart from a slight reduction in the size of each image on many plates (which allowed the removal of the lines separating species on some plates). You get to plate 20 before there's any change in the artwork and this is just a rearrangement of the ducks to accommodate two new species: Mallard and Cape Shoveler. Some of the rearrangements have moved species well away from their closest relatives. For example, the Bat Hawk is now placed with the falcons and I had to resort to the index to find the Oriole Finch with the malimbos, far from the canaries.

The biggest change in terms of illustrations is the replacement of the nearly 40 plates in the first edition painted by

Norman Arlott. Apart from the new species, only a few groups other than those painted by Norman have been updated: eremomelas, prinias and white-eyes. It seems odd to replace perfectly adequate illustrations of wagtails, longclaws, cuckooshrikes, tits, finches and waxbills, when more challenging groups have been left unchanged. The greenbuls in particular would have been more deserving of new artwork. The original illustrations have been stretched to an extra plate to accommodate recent splits, leaving the plates looking sparse and unbalanced in comparison to the rest of the book.

The maps have been extensively revised, taking advantage of the latest data available from bird atlases and online databases. The East African base map has been amended to include rivers and high-elevation areas as well as country boundaries, greatly aiding interpretation. The first edition showed all ranges in red. These have been changed to green for residents, blue for non-breeding migrants and yellow for breeding migrants, which is a big improvement, but I did struggle to spot some of the smaller ranges (despite the addition of arrows highlighting where they were).

Another obvious change is the switch to a sans serif font, which gives the book a more modern feel and creates extra space for the texts. The introductory pages have been rearranged, but are otherwise similar to the first edition. The book follows the BirdLife-HBW taxonomy and nomenclature, rather than the IOC list used in southern Africa. Despite this, most names will be familiar and alternative names are also given (but not in all cases; I had to check the scientific name to identify the 'South African Swallow').

Useful new appendices include lists of the 100 species endemic or

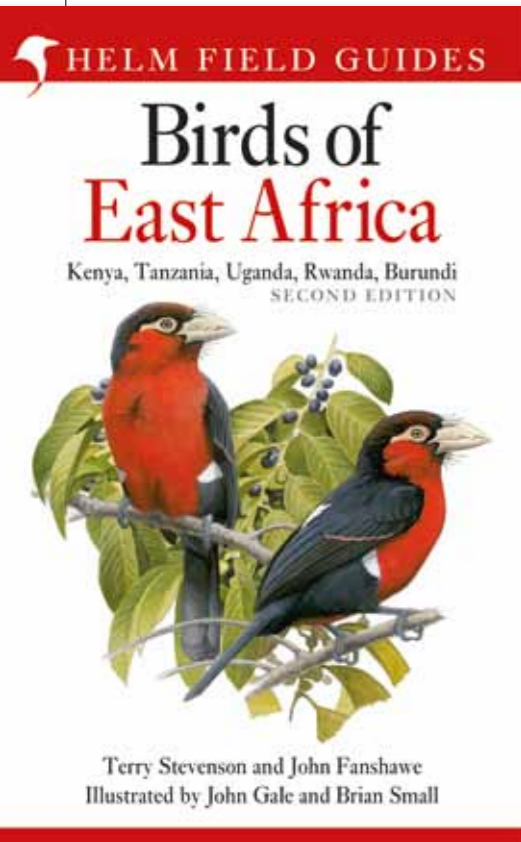


near-endemic to East Africa and the 121 threatened and near-threatened species in the region (not 119 as claimed in the introduction). There are also five country-level maps of the Important

Bird Areas in the region. The indexes to scientific and English names have been combined, reducing their length slightly, and a one-page 'quick index' of bird groups added.

Minor quibbles aside, the new version is bound to remain the field guide of choice for both birders in East Africa and visitors to the region.

PETER RYAN



FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF EAST AFRICA

Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi

Terry Stevenson & John Fanshawe

Illustrated by John Gale and Brian Small

2nd edition.
640 pages.

Bloomsbury Press
Available in hardback and paperback and distributed in South Africa by Jonathan Ball Publishers.

Ever since Terry Stevenson and John Fanshawe's field guide was published in 2002, it has been the first choice identification guide for East Africa. The well-designed, beautifully executed plates set a new standard for guides to the region. Given the fact that approximately 70 per cent of

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