

A Photographic Guide to Birds of Thailand by Michael Webster and Chew Yen Fook. Asia Books, 1997, 144 pp. Bht. 350.

A total of 252 bird species are said to be depicted in this pocket guide. (There are actually rather fewer than this owing to misidentifications and duplications, which I will describe below.) The quality of the photographs is quite good, though most have been taken either in an aviary, or elsewhere than in Thailand, probably in Malaysia or Singapore. This is rather a pity as there are now beginning to be quite a lot of good photographs of Thai birds, taken in the wild, by Thai photographers. The publishers were perhaps reluctant to pay for the use of these, relying instead partly on stock-shots built up during the preparation of other volumes in New Holland's series of SE Asian pocket photographic bird guides. As a result, some of the species shown are not really appropriate for a book on Thai birds, or are of a recognisably different subspecies to those which are found here. Why show a Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot *Loriculus galgulus* when this species is restricted to a small area adjacent to the Malaysian border, while failing to depict its common and widespread Thai congener, Vernal Hanging Parrot *L. vernalis*? The photograph of White-vented Myna *Acridotheres javanicus* is certainly not the Thai form *grandis*, since it shows a pale iris and a very short crest, and appears to be the form *javanicus* from the Sundas.

Even more serious are the great number of misidentified photographs—the book could have done with a good edit by an ornithologist with greater familiarity with Thai birds. The substitutions which I found were Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger* for Indian Shag *P. fuscicollis*; Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* for Eastern Marsh Harrier *C. spilonotus*; Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* for Marsh Sandpiper *T. stagnatilis*; probable Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* for Pin-tailed Snipe *G. stenura*; Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* for White-winged Tern *C. leucopterus*; Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* for Yellow Wagtail *M. flava*; Moustached Babbler *Malacopteron magnirostre* for Sooty-capped Babbler *M. affine*; what is either Grey-cheeked Fulvetta *Alcippe morrisonia* or Mountain Fulvetta *A. peracensis* for Brown-cheeked Fulvetta *A. poioicephala*; a female *Ficedula* flycatcher (probably Little Pied, *F. westermanni*) instead of Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*.

Overall, therefore, this book is rather sloppily put together and disappointing. I would recommend saving your money and waiting until a better photographic guide to Thai birds comes along, as it surely will sooner or later.

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