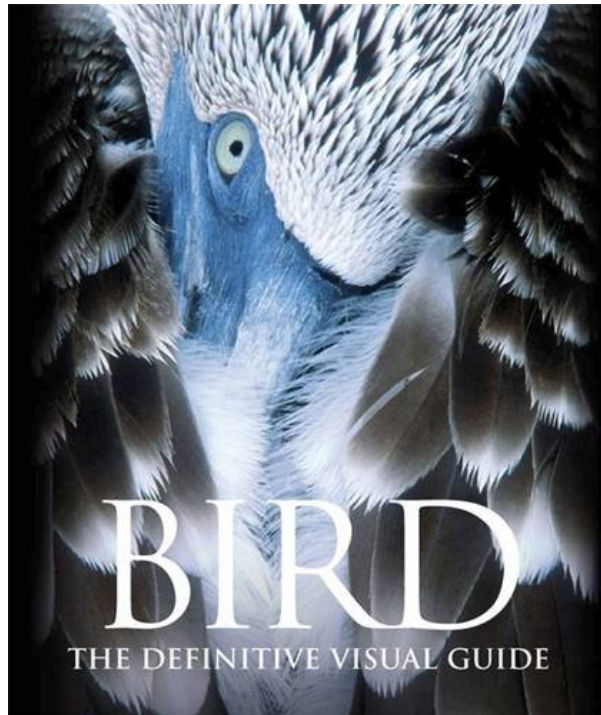
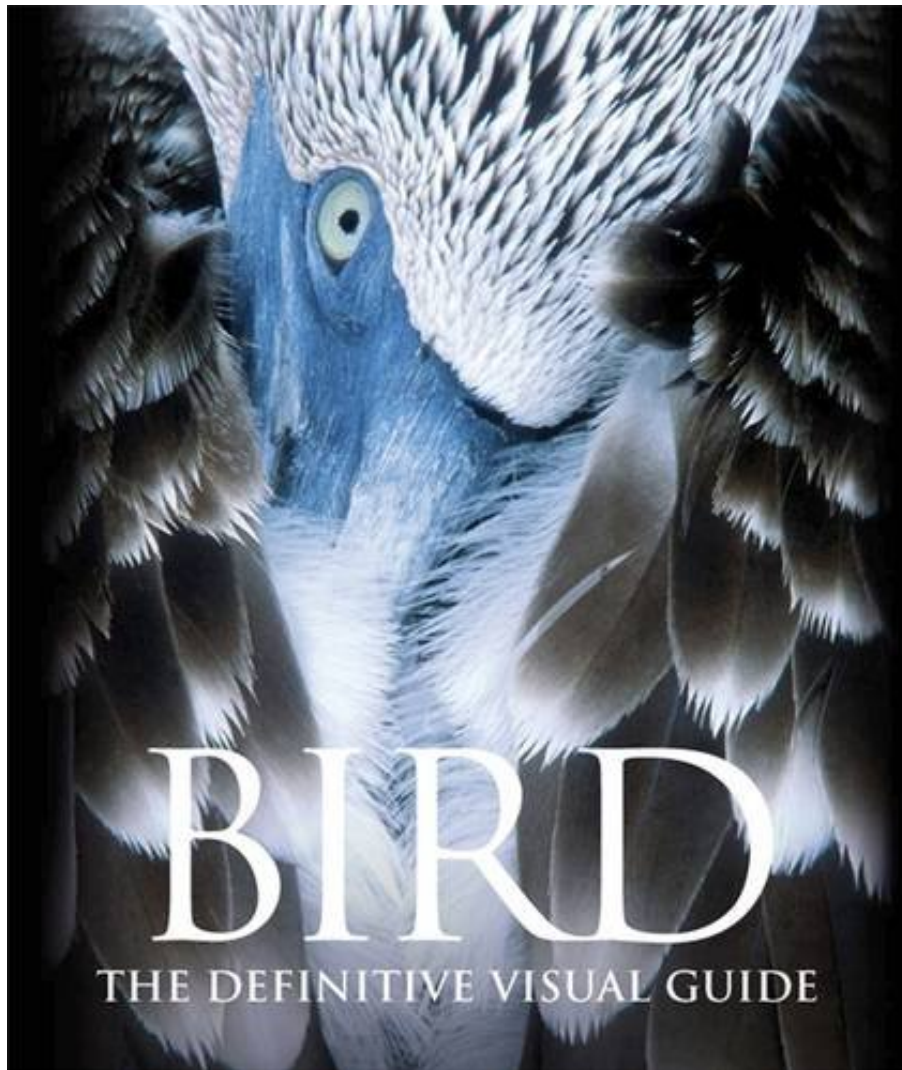


# **BIRD: THE DEFINITIVE VISUAL GUIDE BY BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL**



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## Review

...a mini museum between the covers of a book. [Eyewitness series] -- The New York Times

These books' striking visual impact will draw in even the most casual readers. [Eyewitness series] -- School Library Journal

## From the Inside Flap

Full-color photos. "Each spread is composed of full-color photos, sketches, and explanatory text covering the anatomy, behavior, and adaptations of birds and presented in a visually appealing manner that compels further page turning. The author leads us through all that is fascinating in our study of birds at a level of writing suitable for younger readers. A fine addition to school libraries at all levels."--(starred) Science Books & Films.

## About the Author

Birdlife International is a global partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats, and global biodiversity. Birdlife's partners operate in more than 100 countries and have more than 2,500,000 members.

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The beauty and drama of the bird world brought to breathtaking life in a compact format From hummingbirds weighing less than a coin to monkey-eating eagles, this is a unique celebration of birds, photographed and studied in their natural environments around the world. Explore the complete bird story: from their origins to up-to-date information on flight, anatomy, feeding, communication, breeding, habitat, migrations and life cycles. Spectacular features on the most impressive birds, plus a huge catalogue that profiles nearly fifteen hundred different species makes this a must-have for every bird enthusiast. This book is published with Birdlife International, the world's leading avian authority.

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## Most helpful customer reviews

56 of 56 people found the following review helpful.

Superb Overview of Bird Biology and Species Occurring Worldwide

By Juszcz

Produced in collaboration with Audubon, "Bird: The Definitive Visual Guide" (2007 by DK Publishing)

deserves the highest praise for its superb presentation of birds worldwide. Containing a wide variety of representative species, excellent photographs, and a CD featuring some 60 bird songs from around the globe, this is perhaps the best general survey book available on the Class Aves.

The book consists of three chapters and the bird song CD. Whereas chapters two (nonpasserines) and three (passerines) provide basic and interesting information on the biology and geographic occurrence of selected birds representing specific bird orders and/or families, the first chapter touches on more general topics such as form, function, behavior, conservation, extinction, habitats, and ecology.

The Foreword consists of a brief, one page philosophical reflection on the significance of birds in our lives and is followed by 14 full-page images of such species as the African jacana, the European bee-eater, and the great grey owl. As is the case throughout the book, all of these images are in full color and of very high quality.

The Introduction begins with an examination of bird anatomy and physiology. Those individuals less familiar with these topics will find the explanations to be very clear and accessible. At the same time, the specialist will likely appreciate being reminded of how these topics can be distilled to a rather simplified yet informative presentation. For example, in its brief description of respiration, the text states,

"When a mammal breathes, air flows into its lungs and back out again. Bird lungs work differently: air flows straight through the lungs, via a system of air sacs, before being exhaled. This one-way flow allows air and blood to move in opposite directions, known as countercurrent."

The accompanying diagrams very effectively explain how a bird's lungs function in this manner. The reader will continue to encounter similar, high quality explanations throughout the text.

A representative bird skeleton enables us to understand how this structure keeps a bird's weight to a minimum while simultaneously standing up to the rigors imposed by powerful flight muscles. In addition, the explanation of flight forces, speeds, and patterns (pages 32 and 33) is also informative yet concise.

The introduction goes on to clearly describe general avian characteristics such as feather structure, wing structure, gliding and soaring, legs and feet, bills, mechanisms of feeding, communication, defense, breeding, nests and eggs, parental care, living together, migration, threats, conservation, and extinction. Again, one has to admire the manner in which these topics are effectively explained (excellent text and diagrams/photographs) such that the amateur bird enthusiast, perhaps lacking much in the way of formal biological training, can rapidly be brought "up to speed" on the essentials. But, again, professional biologists should also find the explanations very useful as well.

Chapter 1 continues with an examination of bird habitats (28 pages in all being used to cover this topic). A sound explanation of the 8 different recognized biogeographical realms is a notable feature. The significance of continental drift is also considered with respect to the worldwide distribution of ratites (i.e., birds such as ostriches, emus, and rheas). Curious asides such as this abound and add to our fascination for the Class Aves.

Chapter 2 begins with a general overview of nonpasserine bird species and the criteria used for their classification. We then launch into the various orders and families comprising this very broad Avian group. For example, early in this chapter the two species of kiwis are shown side by side. Their geographic ranges are each indicated with a useful accompanying map (these are used throughout the book for each species presented). Important information, such as size, weight, migratory status, nesting, behavior, and species status (e.g., threatened or endangered), are presented as well. Did you know that kiwis are monogamous and,

despite their harmless appearance, are perfectly capable of inflicting serious wounds to rivals? Very interesting, indeed.

The parrots (a personal favorite group of mine) consist of some 350 or so species and there is no practical way by which a book of this sort can begin to cover every species. Thus, as in all such cases throughout the work, the authors/editors opt to present some of the most representative species (such as African greys [curiously spelled "grays," rather than the traditional British "grey" spelling], blue and gold macaws, budgerigars, and monk parakeets) while also emphasizing some more unusual species with which the average person might be unfamiliar. In this latter category, the New Zealand Kakapo, a ground dweller and the heaviest parrot in the world, is given a deservedly generous presentation. It is noted how this unique species is being brought back from the brink of extinction through very special protective measures. This and similar such success stories add to our desire to continue bird conservation.

Chapter two provides informative introductions to cuckoos, owls, kingfishers, woodpeckers, toucans, hawks/eagles/falcons, and other such nonpasserines. Very good species representatives are included for each group (though I must confess I did miss seeing the black-and-white-casqued hornbill in the hornbill portion of this chapter... but the authors/editors had to draw the line somewhere).

Chapter three deals with the passerines. After a general introduction (including topics such as anatomy, plumage, bills, nesting/parenting, songs, courtship, and socialization), the species within the Order are examined. Thus we meet the thrushes, wrens, warblers, orioles, flycatchers, ovenbirds, etc., all divided amongst two suborders, the Suboscines and Oscines. While the treatment of passerines is, again, excellent and on-par with the rest of the book, I found the sunbirds section to be especially intriguing. Occurring in parts of Asia and Africa, this group appears to fill the niche that in the New World is occupied by the hummingbirds.

This is not the sort of book one would want to take into the field. It is much too large and heavy for that and it generally does not contain enough species representatives of particular Orders and/or Families to be consistently useful in the manner of a species identification manual. It is rather an excellent general reference manual.

In addition, it should be said that the pages can look a bit crammed with information, both photographic and written. I see this as an asset as it seems there are always at least a few new and interesting avian topics to discover whenever one opens this book.

For those seeking a broad overview of bird biology and an excellent presentation of many of the most representative species (with excellent photographs/illustrations and textual information throughout), look no further. This volume easily earns a five star rating.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Love ALL of My DK Books!

By C. L. Wms

The books that DK (Dorling Kindersley) publishes are always marvelous feasts for the eye. They're the sort of volumes that my little town's library never allowed anyone to check out when I was growing up. Large, heavy, high-quality books filled with pictures could only be read by the patrons while in the library! So as a middle-aged adult I find it a special treat to actually be able to own such books. And they would make great "coffee table" volumes, if you don't have a cat who damages them like my cat does when they're left lying out! Otherwise I recommend leaving them out to be handy for browsing through the beautiful pictures and reading bits here and there whenever you have a little time, and the books will fascinate children, as well. As

for this particular title, 'BIRD: The Definitive Visual Guide' is not a birding guidebook, nor is it a comprehensive, in-depth study of one species or of one country's birds. Rather, it's a broad overview of birds in general, with many, many examples and fine photos, plus more information. Each and every page is jam-packed and in color. How could anyone fail to love this book if he or she has any appreciation at all for birds? Oh, and it bears the name Audubon, too, so that's another indicator of an excellent book about birds.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Fantastic Illustrated Guide to Birds

By Katherine Chan

I got this book for my 4 year old daughter who is going through a big "bird phase" in her life. All types of birds seem to fascinate her, and seeing an educational opportunity, we got this book for her for Christmas. This was a great book to get her. The photographs are stunning, the information is sound, and with a poster and a clip art CD included, there's a lot of reasons for her to go through this book over and over again.

Because this book is geared towards older children, the information given is very detailed - something both my kids love. They are learning so many random facts about birds, and really enjoy the intricacies about birds that you simply couldn't get from just watching a tv program about them or through observation alone. The kids were particularly interested in the bone and muscle structure of birds - they really are amazing creatures.

For any bird lover in your life, this book would be a great gift. Highly recommended!

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