Book Review

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All the World's Primates

Pogonias Press, Charlestown 2016
777 pp.; USD 149.95 (softbound)
ISBN 978–1–940496–06–1

With advances in genetic techniques, increased fieldwork in remote places and an improved technology to uncover diversity in nocturnal primates, developing a volume to describe primate diversity is a mammoth task. As of March 2017, 696 taxa of primates, including species and subspecies, have been included in the 2017 IUCN Red List. *All the World's Primates* covers all of these taxa, with an additional 9 taxa described since the Red List assessments. This compendium, with its incredible 777 pages, thus represents the most up-to-date and complete resource about the living primate species and subspecies yet published. It is an invaluable resource to scientists, educators, students, and policy makers, including those concerned with the conservation of primates. The last is of particular importance since about 60% of primate species are threatened with extinction and a further approximately 75% have declining populations [Estrada et al., 2017]. This volume follows on from its predecessor *The Pictorial Guide to the Living Primates* published in 1996, when only 234 species of primates were recognised. Thus, arriving at such a compendium of knowledge about the taxonomy, morphology, behaviour, distribution and threats of 705 taxa was no mean feat.

The editors have used several techniques to deliver a collection of accurate and up-to-date information. In the development of this volume, they enlisted the help of more than 300 experts in the field, who wrote or co-wrote individual species and subspecies accounts. This process was simplified by uploading the information into a standardised form on an online database, one that still remains active so that any new taxa can be included in an online version of the book, which also gives readers access to more photographs and multimedia options such as maps and videos. These entries were then standardised by the editors so that they are written in a single voice, allowing for easy comparability and understanding of the entries. For the non-specialist, introductory chapters describing specialised taxonomic and ecological terms are provided, including one on taxonomy written by leading expert Colin Groves. Other primate experts who provide insight into the utility of the volume in introductory pieces include Jane Goodall, Russ Mittermeier and Anthony Rylands. The volume is based on work by researchers in the field of primatology comprising a staggering roughly 6,000 references, providing an invaluable guide to a wealth of information about primates.

A notable aspect of this work is that the editors provide a balance between the living primate taxa. The textbook treatment of primates is normally to provide an increased amount of information about taxa the more closely related they are to humans, with all lemurs or lorises or Neotropical primates being included in only 1 or 2 chapters, and the great apes very often receiving a chapter for each species. In *All the World's Primates*, length of entries is balanced and based on what is actually known about a taxon, with better-studied taxa having deservedly longer entries. At the same time, even entries for better-known taxa do not exceed 2 pages. For taxa with knowledge gaps, categories for which little is known state “NA” meaning that prospective students in primatology can quickly identify knowledge gaps and aim to fill them with further study. The inclusion of photographs for every entry in the book increases the utility of this volume, as does the inclusion of a drawing made as accurately as possible from museum specimens if photos of the living animal are not available. Finally, the conservation status at the time of writing is in-

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cluded as a symbol for each taxon. It would thus be possible to produce miniversions of this book to create biogeographically apposite field guides of primates. The current volume is certainly too large to serve as such a guide itself.

This book serves to illustrate the incredible diversity of the world's primates. But beyond being an information source, the threats to each species are highlighted, and in some cases the photographs that portray these threats are graphic. I applaud the authors from not shying away from such a vital topic. By providing not only details of the threats, but also giving the reader a list of ways they can help to conserve primates through their own actions, through volunteering with organisations, through donations and even through the purchase of the book, the editors of the book also provide a sense of empowerment to the reader. We can only hope that such conservation messages come through strongly and that the next edition 20 years on will not need to include a new chapter on recent primate extinctions.

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