The book's primary aim is to assist birders to decide how best to get to grips with the dizzying array of 2792 species in 142 families spread across 68 countries and territories. In continental Africa and adjacent islands. Each species' range is indicated and the sites identified where it is most easily seen. Although Mike largely followed the IOC World Bird Names list, he has tracked all the recent splits and lumps and highlights potential future taxonomic changes. This is a massive undertaking and a key resource for anyone interested in African birds. Introduced species and unconfirmed records are listed at the end, after lists of references and useful birding websites.

This is an essential book for African birders and armchair travellers. I'm confident it will achieve its overarching goal of promoting birding in Africa and thus help to conserve African birds and their habitats.

Peter Ryan

Shorebirds in Action

An introduction to waders and their behaviour

Richard Chandler

Whittles Publishing, Dunbeath, Scotland
Softcover, 248 pages
£21.95 or $29.95, order online

Well-known bird photographer Richard Chandler has been obsessed with shorebirds for more than 40 years and has published two guides to the shorebirds of the northern hemisphere. His latest offering is a lavishly illustrated survey of shorebirds globally, with photographs of more than three-quarters of the world's 243 shorebird species. The text is divided into seven chapters, with the first and longest chapter introducing the 16 families that comprise the group. The more traditional shorebirds are given preferential treatment, with only brief accounts of the buttonquails, sheathbills, couriers, phaloropes and pratincoles.

The remaining six chapters highlight different aspects of shorebird biology. Chapter 2 deals with plumages and moult, chapter 3 with feeding and diet, chapter 4 with courtship and territorial displays, and chapter 5 with breeding and territorial behaviour, chapter 6 with resources, including field guides, sound recordings, apps and site guides. Some people may find the focus on numbers of species a bit narrow and Mike acknowledges the recent trend to chase higher levels of avian diversity. The second quarter of the book is a tribute to Africa's bird families, supplemented by a wealth of Tasso Leventis's photographs. It's a fascinating overview, listing the diversity in each family and the number of species found in Africa. Genetic evidence continues to reveal surprising family-level diversity, with the number of bird families almost doubling over the past few decades. More than half of these occur in Africa and 33 are endemic to the region.

The second half of the book is an up-to-date annotated checklist of the birds of Africa and adjacent islands. Each species' range is indicated and the sites identified where it is most easily seen. Although Mike largely followed the IOC World Bird Names list, he has tracked all the recent splits and lumps and highlights potential future taxonomic changes. This is a massive undertaking and a key resource for anyone interested in African birds. Introduced species and unconfirmed records are listed at the end, after lists of references and useful birding websites.

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