

Book review

Birding Ethiopia – A guide to the country’s birding sites by K. Behrens, K. Barnes & C. Boix. Lynx Jan 2010. 256 pages, 22.8 x 14 cm, Paperback, English. ISBN-13: 978-84-96553-55-2.

Ethiopia, the scenic and rugged ‘Roof of Africa’ is a land of ornithological superlatives where birds are not only spectacularly abundant but also remarkably tame. During the northern winter, large numbers of Palaearctic migrants enrich the already impressive local avifauna, boosting a country list of nearly 850 species. Of these, 16 species are country endemic while another 18 species are restricted to the Abyssinian Highlands of Ethiopia and Eritrea. If you are after some of Africa’s most enigmatic endemics—*Stresseman’s Bushcrow*, *Prince Ruspoli’s Turaco*, *Rouget’s Rail* or *Sidamo Lark* to name a few—within some of Africa’s most stunning scenery, Ethiopia is the place for you to go. And now more than ever, given that Lynx Edicions has produced a lavishly illustrated where-to-find-birds guide written by three of Africa’s leading field ornithologists. The book starts with a brief introduction on the country, local people, accommodation, roads, health and safety, all issues that can be very helpful when planning your birding trip. Already here the book stands out because of the stunning photographs of birds, people and landscapes—over 110 scattered throughout the book make this guide an attractive present even for non-birders. Very interesting is the taxonomic section on potential splits—if you pay minute attention to all the endemic and near-endemic subspecies, your next lifer could be from the comfort of an armchair ... The bulk of the book is taken by a detailed description of 26 top birding areas listed under three geographic regions: *The Northwest* (including Addis Ababa); *The Great Rift Valley*, and *The South* (including Bale Mountains National Park). For each area, key species, other species of interest, habitat characteristics, key birding spots, most appropriate time and road directions are listed - again in a concise, attractive and very efficient layout. Many of the accounts include GPS coordinates for specific spots—very handy when navigating in confusing areas—and most maps are annotated with marker points and kilometer readings. The book ends with a section on the most sought-after bird of Ethiopia, a brief discussion of the best sites where to find them, and a complete, indexed list of the country’s birds. The keen combination of text, maps, lists and superb pictures makes ‘*Birding Ethiopia*’ an outstanding birding site guide that deserves a place on every birder’s bookshelf.

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