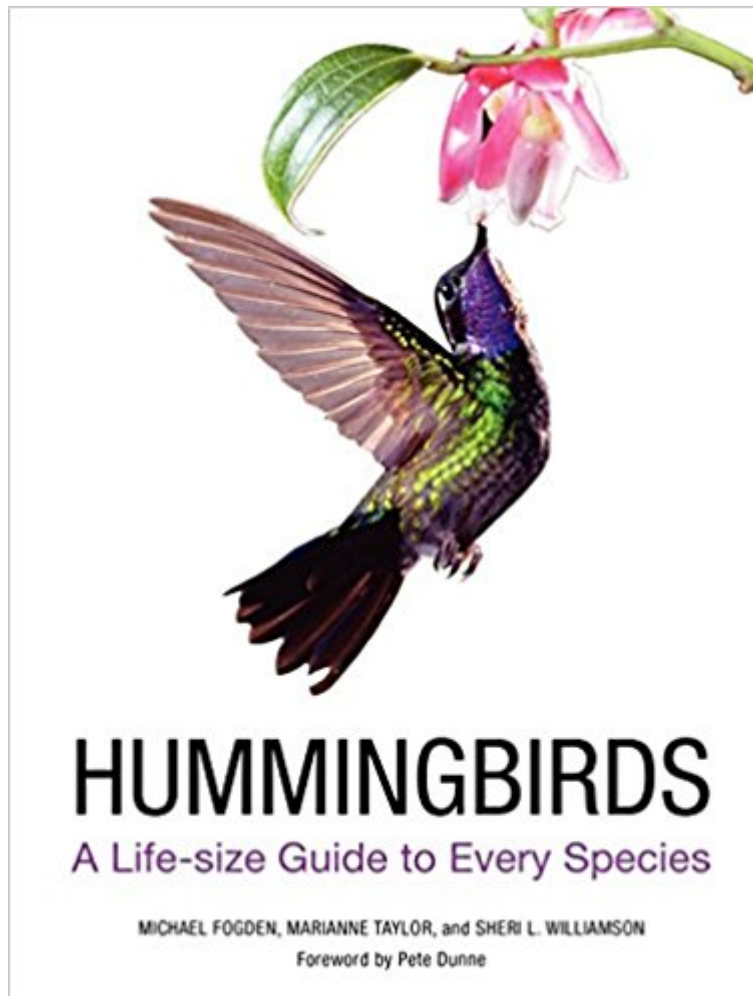




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Hummingbirds: A Life-size Guide To Every Species



Synopsis

Hummingbirds have always held popular appeal, with their visual brilliance, extraordinary flight dexterity, jewel-like color, and remarkably small size. This is the first book to profile all 338 known species, from the Saw-billed Hermit to the Scintillant Hummingbird. Every bird is shown life-size in glorious full-color photographs. Every species profile includes a flight map and key statistics, as well as information about behavior, plumage, and habitat. This authoritative guide has been annotated by the world's leading experts on hummingbirds and features a foreword by renowned birding author Pete Dunne.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Marianne Taylor is a freelance writer, illustrator, photographer, and editor. Her interest in natural history began at an extremely early age, as she became passionately interested in first butterflies and then birds. The daughter of two librarians, one of whom later became a secondhand bookseller, Marianne was as bookish as she was bird-obsessed. She worked for seven years in natural history publishing, first for bird book publisher Christopher Helm, and later for Birdwatch magazine. Her particular interest in owls and other birds of prey was fueled by a brief but unforgettable adventure in 2005, when she joined bird ringers studying Ural, Tengmalm's, and Eagle owls in the forests of Sweden. She began a new career as a writer in 2007, and since then has written more than a dozen books for adults and children on a range of natural history subjects. Her previous work includes RSPB British Birds of Prey, Beautiful Owls, and Owls.

The book falls far short of expectations given its title and the reputation of the senior authors (MF and SW). Firstly, it is NOT a "life-size guide to every species", as photographs are missing for 76 species including many commoner hummingbirds. Secondly, the quality of the graphic layout and printing has the appearance of a quick cut and paste job. Images in the Hummingbird (HB) Directory are cut-outs which have been digitally extracted from photographs of varying digital quality which often only worsen when attempting to portray them as life-size. The resultant edges can give an unnatural appearance to the HB. Some appear to be poor composites where at times the HB is sharp and the flower or background is blurry or vice-versa (eg- Tumbes Hummingbird, Buff-bellied Hummingbird, ..). For others, where part of the HB was obscured or could not be extracted, the missing parts appear to have been digitally reconstructed (eg- Marvellous Spatuletail, Black-breasted Hillstar, Garnet-throated Hummingbird, ...). Many are just too blurry or grainy (eg - Blossomcrown, Fork-tailed Wood-nymph, the coquettes, ...). Others appear to have been recycled from earlier publications by Mr Fogden (eg- Violet Sabrewing, Volcano HB, ...). Some of the in-flight photos by Mr Fogden using flash photography have over-illuminated the HB resulting in colors never seen in settings with natural light. Such photos show very little resemblance to the actual species as observed in the wild or the descriptions in the text (eg- Napo Sabrewing, Buff-winged Starfrontlet, Tyrian Metaltail, ...) Other photos are marred by color casts which could have been corrected in post-processing (eg - White-vented Plumeleteer, White-sided Hillstar, ...). Given the general availability of high-quality HB photographs amongst the birding community, the publishers could have produced a far better final product. The book itself consists of a 20 page introduction briefly covering evolution and taxonomy, color and iridescence, flight, feeding, courtship&nesting, and migration of HB's. For each species there is a narrative including a map and notes on distribution, habitat description with altitude range, size (length and weight) and conservation status. Although inconsistent in the depth of coverage, the material is correct. Subspecies are listed within the distribution notes, but no references are provided as to which subspecies is shown in the photo. The descriptions provided for each species lack sufficient detail to make the book an important reference text for anyone seriously interested in HB's. As a field guide, the book has serious omissions. The scale of the maps makes them of very limited use. Photos for both male and female are only provided for about 30 species (mostly for SW USA, Costa Rica, and NW Ecuador). Many of the views do little to help aid identification of the individual species. There is very limited if any discussion of important field markings or differences between similar species. Bill length, color and curvature which are missing for each species, would have been far more useful than species

weight. Vocalizations have been totally ignored. Given its weight, the book is best left at home on a coffee table. Despite its shortcomings, the colorful book may still be popular with many backyard HB enthusiasts given its misleading title, the reputation of the senior authors, and its modest price under \$20. Buyer beware!!

BASICS: hardcover; attractive photo collection for 262 (78%) of the world's 338 species of hummingbirds with brief summaries for the other 76 not shown; of the 262 species shown most (75%) are by only the male and 12% by only the female; text for each bird covers a general description with notes about favorite flowers, the nest and eggs, and about the bird's status and conservation concerns; not a field or identification guide but a small-sized artwork.

REVIEW: The focal point of this attractive book (8 x 6 x 1.3 inches) is the set of life-sized photographs for this diverse family of birds. However, it must be noted only 262 (78%) of the 338 known species of hummingbirds are shown. This conflicts a bit with the book's sub-title stating "Every Species". The other 76 (22%) of the species are mentioned at the back of the book with the same material and range maps given for the illustrated birds. These non-illustrated hummingbirds are typically the rarer or lesser known species, even including the extinct Brace's Hummingbird. However, some of these missing birds have been well photographed such as the Plain-capped Starthroat and Green Mango. The photographs do a nice job of showing the birds in a variety of positions: Flying, feeding, perching, or nesting. The color and clarity of the photos makes the book enjoyable to examine. However, some of the photographs tend to show a slightly muted or washed coloration to the birds. The color reproductions may not be perfect but, they do represent the bird well enough. A slightly different tact was taken with the photographs. Each bird has been digitally cut out of its background and placed onto a white page. I suspect this was done to help fit the bird, the map, and all the text onto the same page for easier reading; and, perhaps for a slightly different aesthetic approach. These photographs, while showing the birds nicely, do not lend themselves to be fully useful for field use or identification. This is because most (75%) of the species are only of the male; and, 12% show only the female such as the Lucifer Hummingbird and Bahama Woodstar. A total of 33 (13%) of the photographed species show both male and female. As an odd note, the Green-bellied Hummingbird is represented by only a juvenile. Yes, these photos can be helpful to get a good impression of what the bird looks like but only from the one angle shown in the photograph. An additional 26 photographs (with background included) are shown in the introductory pages. It should be kept in mind this book is not designed to be a field or identification guide. Instead, it is a nice reference, or even artwork, to visually examine most of the world's

hummingbirds and, to read about their natural history. The material provided for each of the 338 species is contained within a single paragraph. A couple of sentences provide a general description of the bird and, sometimes, a few words on differentiating that bird from a similar species. A few more sentences comment on the various subspecies and their physical differences. The remainder of the bird's account gives the reader an overview of its life history such as distribution, favorite flowers, description of nests, and brief notes on status or conservation concerns. The beginning of the book offers an informative 19-page introduction. A few pages cover each of these topics: Evolution and taxonomy, color and iridescence, flight, feeding, courtship and nesting, molt, and, migration. Lastly, each of the 338 species is accompanied by a range map supplied by BirdLife International. The range is denoted by using three colors: Red for resident, year-round birds; green for breeding, summer ranges; and, blue for where the species is found during the winter. The maps are useful for assessing the general range of the bird; however, their small size (3x2 cm) in combination with showing a large geographic area make many of the range maps difficult to examine. The Magenta-throated Woodstar's limited range in the highlands of Costa Rica and Panama is barely visible in a small map that shows a large area from Massachusetts all the way south to Bolivia. The faintest sliver of red ink makes the range map incorrectly appear to show the bird as being found along the Pacific coast. If you have an appreciation of hummingbirds, you will want a copy of this book. It is nice to see life-sized photos of the birds and to have so many species together in one relatively compact book. Just keep in mind this book is a general summary or overview of the birds; that not all birds are shown; and, the book is more of a beginning resource to help learn what hummingbirds exist and not as a field or identification guide. -- (written by Jack at Avian Review with sample pages, April 2014)

Some of the hummingbirds do not have photos, the whole reason for buying the book. That was not mentioned in the write up when purchasing.

Did not meet expectations. Showed all South American birds/migration routes. Very few pages devoted to North American birds/ migration routes. There is no index to look up different hummingbirds. Not at all what I was looking for. I returned the book to .

My husband loves it!

every once in a while i come across a book which i am compelled to share with my friends/family,

and this is one of them. we have lots of hummingbirds here all year round. we are on the flyway for migratory birds, as well, so for a few weeks in the Spring and Fall, we have some alien species. this book is not only a great coffee table read but is a great reference. the images are beautiful.

everything i expected

The print in this book is very small and light. It's in some kind of a fancy print. You need magnifying glasses to read it. The pictures are beautiful though. Glossy pages with wonderful color.

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