

## Book reviews

Review of *A complete guide to Antarctic wildlife: birds and mammals of the Antarctic Continent and the Southern Ocean*, by Hadoram Shirihi (2002). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 510 pp. ISBN 0-691-11414-5.

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This impressive book is an invaluable, fully illustrated, wildlife guide for tourists and scientists visiting the Southern Ocean and Antarctica. In the preface of the book it is referred to as a *field guide*, but with a weight of almost 2 kg it is more suitable to use indoors than carrying around in a backpack. The book is very comprehensive and includes most of what tourists interested in natural history and scientists travelling to these remote parts of the world need to know about birds, mammals and their habitats.

The book is divided into three main parts. The first is a synopsis of the region, including description of the physical environment, the marine ecosystem, geology and vegetation, as well as a general description of the bird and marine mammal faunas of the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic. Conservation issues such as tourism, exploitation of marine resources, global warming, the ozone hole and seabirds killed by longline fishing are also dealt with. There is even a short account of the history of Antarctic exploration. This section includes a checklist (with regional distribution and conservation status) of all birds and marine mammals known to have occurred in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean north to ca. 40° S.

The second—and main—part of the book is the species account, which comprises more than 300 pages. The individual species accounts are preceded by a general account of groups of related species, such as penguins, great albatrosses, etc. Species identification is aided by beautiful colour



Southern elephant seal (*Mirounga leonina*). Photo H. Shirihi. © Alula Press Oy (Finland); published by Princeton University Press 2003. Image reprinted with permission of Princeton University Press.

plates (35 in total) by the wildlife artist Brett Jarrett, as well as accompanying colour photographs of high quality. The whole book is actually packed with excellent colour photographs (almost 600) of birds, mammals and landscapes. A distribution map is presented for most species. For many of the marine species, the non-breeding distribution is incompletely known, so the distributions are (as also stated by the author) only approximate indications.

The third part includes presentations of individual islands in the Southern Ocean as well as the different sections of the Antarctic Continent. These accounts comprise geographic descriptions (with maps), descriptions and checklists of the occurrence of bird and mammal species, and conservation and human history issues. This part of the book is especially valuable for visitors to these localities. Most visitors to the Antarctica and the Southern Ocean travel by ship and board their ship in southern ports in South America, South Africa, Australia or New Zealand. The section also covers these “gateways to the Antarctic” and presents an account of seabirds and marine mammals that may be encountered in waters in these regions.

The book contains a tremendous amount of information of the wildlife in the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic regions. The species accounts are in general good and up to date. However, studies of the birds and mammals of these regions continuously produce new knowledge of their biology. Thus, parts of species accounts may soon be outdated. For example, new studies of Ross seals by E. Nordøy and A. S. Blix have altered the tra-

ditional assumption that this species is primarily confined to heavy pack ice, as stated in the book (p. 314). Using satellite telemetry, Nordøy and Blix have revealed that the Ross seal spends most of its time outside the breeding season in the open ocean north of the pack ice. And in contrast to a maximum diving depth of 212 m listed by Shirihai in the book, Nordøy and Blix found a maximum diving depth of almost 800 m for Ross seals.

In such a comprehensive book, it is difficult to avoid some minor mistakes or omissions. I noticed that Bouvetøya is not included on the breeding distribution map of Antarctic Prion on p. 178. However, it is listed as breeding on Bouvetøya on p. 415. On the map of Bouvetøya (p. 413) "Nyrøysa" is located on the wrong side of the island. In spite of some such mistakes, the editor, Guy Kirwan, has done a great job and deserves much of the credit for this book, together with Shirihai and the artist Brett Jarrett.

I would definitely bring this book along on a travel to Antarctica and the Southern Ocean and would have benefited from it during my previous visits to the region. The book is also one of the best sources of information for people who just want to learn more about Antarctic wildlife even if they do not have the opportunity to travel there.

*Review of Islands of the Arctic, by Julian Dowdeswell & Michael Hambrey (2002). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Xvi + 280 pp. ISBN 0-521-81333-6.*

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This is a well illustrated introductory book about the islands of the Arctic. The 25 × 25 cm format, with about two-thirds of the space taken up by photos of a mostly very good quality, clearly indicates the aim of the book to convey the beauty of these islands and their natural features to the

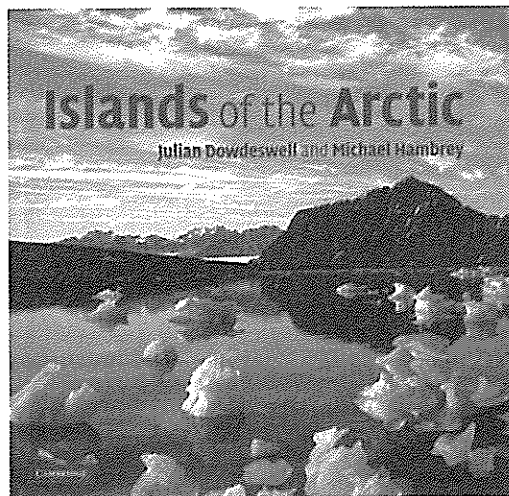


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reader. The chapters are comparatively short and are written in a popular scientific way, with emphasis on explaining the natural environment and the related geological and geophysical processes. There are a few rough maps and an absolute minimum of diagrams and other scientific illustrations.

The authors—renowned earth scientists from the universities of Cambridge and Wales—state in their introduction: "Our aim with this book... is to help the visitor to learn more about the natural environment of the Arctic islands and, at the same time, through the use of photographs taken largely by ourselves, to acquire a lasting visual impression of the region, even from a brief visit. We also hope that the reader will become better informed about current environmental issues, so that we all may be encouraged to adopt a more sustainable approach to human activity in the Arctic." While there is no doubt that the book fully satisfies its two first intentions, the information it provides on current environmental issues is too poor to indicate guidelines for human behaviour in the Arctic.

When using the book, the reader should always have in mind that its subject is not the entire Arctic but rather the islands of the Arctic (this is not always made clear throughout the text): the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, Greenland, Svalbard, Jan Mayen, and the Russian Arctic islands and archipelagos (Franz Josef Land, Novaya Zemlya, Severnaya Zemlya, the New Siberi-

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