
In 1984, Michael Jennings embarked on a ambitious project called the Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Arabia Project (ABBA) to collect information on the status and distribution of Arabian breeding birds. Twenty six years later, the results of his determination and the hard work of all those who have contributed observations, data and knowledge to the project are published in this volume. This is a labour of love. I enjoyed reading the Author’s Preface and learning a little more about the personel journey that Mike Jennings has taken since his arrival in Arabia in 1969. Also worth reading in the Preface is a discussion on the contribution made by Richard Meinechtag, author of “Birds of Arabia” whose reputation has been questioned in recent years.

This is a beautifully produced volume that is well illustrated with line drawings and maps that accompany each species account. A generous number of first rate colour photographs, many by the well known bird photographers Hans and Jens Eriksen make this an easy book to ‘leaf’ through. Chapter 1 covers aspects of Arabian ornithology including endemism, nomadism, exotic birds, well known bird photographers Hans and Jens Eriksen make this an easy book to ‘leaf’ through. This is a beautifully produced volume that is well illustrated with line drawings and maps that accompany each species account. A generous number of first rate colour photographs, many by the well known bird photographers Hans and Jens Eriksen make this an easy book to ‘leaf’ through.

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The bulk of the book is concerned with species accounts covering the 273 species that have been proven to breed within the Arabian Peninsula (including Socotra). These are well researched and summaries some of the actions being taken across the region.

Conservation work which really helps a species. The Fund would support projects on species which are endangered (generally according to the IUCN/SSC Red List), data deficient, or locally important, covering work such as surveying, direct conservation action, scientific research and local awareness.

The grants will be awarded to individuals and organisations who will actually improve the long-term needs of Arabian countries and summarises some of the actions being taken across the region.

The Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund was initially announced at the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona in October 2008, and was established in the form of an endowment through a donation by Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi. The Fund has been accepting applications since mid-March 2009 for grants of up to $5000 and between $5000 and $25,000.

The Fund was established on the basis that in the broader environmental debate, direct species conservation has lost out to wider issues such as climate change, sustainability, poverty alleviation etc., as it is now seen as a by-product of larger issues. This has led to fewer resources going to support direct species conservation, resulting in under-funded field biologists, wardens and conservationists, as well as leading to a loss of expertise and experience in this field, all to the detriment of global biodiversity.

It is the objective of the Fund to work towards a well-supported community of conservationists and experts, helping to re-affirm the importance of species conservation as a discipline and encouraging direct species conservation in the field. The Fund aims to achieve this by providing grants to dedicated individuals and organizations who genuinely make a difference in the field, to in situ conservation needs of Arabian countries and summarises some of the actions being taken across the region.

Biologists, biology teachers and students, conservationists, anyone involved in wildlife management and especially anyone interested in birds will find this book volume valuable.