

# Bulletin of the BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

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## CLUB ANNOUNCEMENTS

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club will be held in the upstairs room at the Barley Mow, Horseferry Road, Westminster, London SW1P 2EE, at 5.30 pm on Tuesday 24 May 2016.

### AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 19 May 2015 (see *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 135: 193, and the BOC website).
3. Receive and consider the Chairman's Review, The Trustees' Report and Accounts for 2015 (these will be available in the room before the start of the meeting).
4. The Bulletin Editor's Report—Mr G. M. Kirwan.
5. BOC: The Way Forward: resolution for consideration to be circulated separately.
6. Any other business (*any items should be received by the Hon. Secretary by 16 May 2016*).

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### REVIEW

Gedeon, K., Grüneberg, C., Mitschke, A., Sudfeldt, C., Eikhorst, W., Fischer, S., Flade, M., Frick, S., Geiersberger, I., Koop, B., Kramer, M., Krüger, T., Roth, N., Ryslavy, T., Stübing, S., Sudmann, S. R., Steffens, S., Vökler, F. & Witt, K. 2014. *Atlas Deutscher Brutvogelarten* [Atlas of German breeding birds]. Stiftung Vogelmonitoring Deutschland und Dachverband Deutscher Avifaunisten, Münster. 800 pp, many colour maps. ISBN 978-3-9815543-3-5. €98.

When birders these days, especially British ones, are considering European destinations for their holidays, Spain, Hungary or Finland often figure in their imaginations; Germany, despite being one of the largest countries in the union and situated at the heart of the continent, is certainly not an automatic first choice. Indeed, as a comparatively regular visitor to the country, I can attest to the fact that I have spent most of my time in museums and scarcely any in rural areas. Yet, as this gargantuan tome proves beyond all doubt, Germany's breeding avifauna is rich and distinctive, comprising a mix of species typical of virtually all parts of the European continent, thus Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*, European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* and Common Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* share *lebensraum* with birds as diverse as White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Great Bustard *Otis tarda*, Spotted Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes*, Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*, Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*, Collared *Ficedula albicollis* and Red-breasted Flycatchers *F. parva*, Citril Finch *Carduelis citrinella* and Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*. Perhaps particularly notable for 'foreign' birdwatching visitors are ten species of breeding owls (including European Scops Owl *Otus scops*, which only recently became a regular summer visitor) and nine woodpeckers, although some of the *desiderata* in these groups are far from widespread in Germany.

The present work, which represents the ultimate output of five years of field work, between 2005 and 2009, and involved more than 4,000 observers (all of them named in one of the appendices!), documents a total of 280 bird species as breeders, of which 268 are considered regular (20 of these non-natives), with another 12 (five non-natives) reported breeding only a few times during the survey period. Kai Gedeon and his many co-authors are to be congratulated for seeing to production such a marvellous and attractive volume as a fitting culmination to an enormous project.

The first part of the book comprises six chapters that provide an introduction to the atlas project and its history, the landscape and geography of Germany, bird-monitoring programmes in the country, the different methodological approaches required to mapping and modelling the distributions of common, less frequent and rare species, as well as colonial breeders, the organisation of atlas work in different parts of the German federation, and finally an overview of the distribution and abundance of the country's breeding birds. In all, it is believed that somewhere between 70 million and 100 million pairs of birds currently breed in Germany, of which Common Blackbird *Turdus merula* and Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* number eight million pairs each, while Great Tits *Parus major* comprise five million pairs and an additional 19 species

each potentially amount to in excess of one million pairs, i.e. these 22 species represent in the region of 80% of the overall total!

Needless to say, the species accounts represent the vast majority of this lavish book, with the majority (221) of the regularly occurring species being treated within a double-page spread; the text, an attractive painting, and a map depicting the global range on the left-hand page, with two detailed maps showing (1) square occupancy and density across Germany during the survey period and (2) comparative distribution in 1985, as well as a single-paragraph English summary, on the opposite page. The 45 commonest species receive two double-page spreads each, with the additional pages occupied by maps showing modelled density in the survey period and a combination map overlaying the actual data and the modelled information. Finally, another 45 (occasional or extinct breeders) are treated more summarily, each with a short text, painting and global range map, and two species per page. This group includes taxa as diverse and exciting as Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* (bred until the 17th century, reintroduced in neighbouring Austria in the last decade), Greater Spotted Eagle *Clanga clanga* (mixed pairs with Lesser Spotted Eagles *C. pomarina* recorded in several recent years), Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (seven breeding records since 1850), Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (formerly regular in northern Germany, but extinct as a breeder since 1930), Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* (single unsuccessful breeding attempt in 1966), Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrhaptes paradoxus* (single nesting event in 1888), Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (first recorded in the country in 1977, with somewhat sporadic breeding records since 1996) and Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (very occasional indications of nesting, although none since the early 1980s).

The remainder of the book's content comprises a series of appendices, among them tables summarising the country's breeding birds with populations by state and analysing the data quality species by species, as well as the effects of climate on selected species, a gazetteer, and finally a bibliography comprising almost 2,100 references.

If, like me, English is your first language and any schoolboy German you once possessed has, regrettably, been largely forgotten, then you will be largely limited to the English summaries, which are provided not only for all of the main species accounts, but also the occasional and extinct breeders, while brief English abstracts are provided for the introductory chapters, there is an explanatory text for understanding the layout of the species accounts, and the legends for tables and figures are bilingual. All very welcome, and this degree of accessibility for non-German speakers should ensure that this exceptional book, not only in its content but its quality of production, will be widely read and cited. All those with a serious interest in the European avifauna are well advised to take a look at it. Some further information and an English-language order form are available online: [http://www.dda-web.de/index.php?cat=pub&subcat=adebar\\_en](http://www.dda-web.de/index.php?cat=pub&subcat=adebar_en)

Guy M. Kirwan

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#### ERRATA

In the paper by Tennyson *et al.* (2015) A new species of extinct *Pterodroma* petrel (Procellariiformes: Procellariidae) from the Chatham Islands, New Zealand (*Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 135: 267–277), on p. 274, two of the museum registration numbers (NMNZ S.35789.1 and NMNZ S.35789.2) for the paratype specimens of *Pterodroma imberi* sp. nov. are incorrect. The correct numbers are NMNZ S.37589.1 and NMNZ S.37589.2, as presented in Table 1 on p. 269. In addition, the cytochrome-*b* GenBank no. for Atlantic Petrel *P. incerta* and cytochrome-*b* genetic distance between *P. incerta* and *P. imberi* sp. nov. are missing from Table 2. The cytochrome-*b* GenBank number is HQ420315 and the cytochrome-*b* genetic distance is 5.44.