

The *BB/BTO* Best Bird Book of the Year 2002

British Birds and the British Trust for Ornithology announce the winner of the Award for the title of **BEST BIRD BOOK OF THE YEAR**.

All books reviewed in *British Birds* or the BTO publications *BTO News* and *Bird Study* during the year 2002 were eligible for consideration for this Award.



For this competition, each of the six judges was asked beforehand to select a provisional list of six titles, and the resulting group of books (plus a small number of 'honourable mentions') formed our short-list. Although the judging for this Award does not follow any formal criteria, we are looking for special merit in books which will, we believe, appeal to the readership of *BB* and *BTO News*. In addition, in selecting these Awards, we hope to encourage good work by both publishers and authors. Judging was carried out at the BTO conference at Swanwick, Derbyshire, in December, where the short-listed books were available for further scrutiny. Eventually, the initial short-list of 18 was whittled down to 12 titles; each judge was then asked to rank these 12, so that the final winner and runners-up could be identified.

WINNER: Handbook of the Birds of the World. Vol. 7. Jacamars to Woodpeckers

Edited by Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott & Jordi Sargatal. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, 2002 (see Brit. Birds 95: 663).

In the past, we have always treated additional volumes of a multi-volume series as relating to a single title. *HBW* received the award of 'The "British Birds" Best Bird Book of the Year' in 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 86: 569), but this year, since its seventh volume was clearly the most outstanding book on our table, we simply could not ignore it. The Spanish publisher, Lynx Edicions, recently questioned readers as to whether it should finish the project in the original target of 12 volumes or adopt a new plan extending the series to 16 volumes. That the overwhelming response from consumers (93% of over 3,000 responses) was to continue the recent trend of longer, fuller texts, with more photos and more comprehensive plates, speaks for itself. The superb essay on the world's extinct birds by Errol Fuller added an extra dimension to this

volume which we particularly liked. The *BB* reviewer summed it up as 'colossal, lavish, definitive, meaty, beautiful' – it is just that, and we have to salute the series once again.

2nd: A Guide to the Birds of Western Africa

By Nik Borrow and Ron Demey. Christopher Helm, A&C Black, London, 2002 (see Brit. Birds 95: 404).

This book is a much-needed guide for the region, and offers a combination of text and illustrations that breaks new ground. It is beautifully produced, and while some might consider that its size and its price (£55) are a drawback, it must be viewed as a handbook rather than as a field guide (the latter will presumably follow), and the amount of work which has gone into this publication sets the price in better context. We felt perhaps a little disappointed with some of the plates, but this should not detract from the work as a whole. Given that our winner is indeed part of a long-term project, this book may, perhaps justifiably, claim to be the best 'brand new' bird book of 2002.