At the start of his second chapter, Rob Fuller says, "It is unwise to be dogmatic about the habitat associations of any bird species. Even the classification of species as habitat generalists or specialists requires careful consideration." Fortunately for us, despite his own pessimism, Rob persists in his hunt for the secret of avian habitat relationships with a glittering array of invited contributors that make this book much more than just a valiant effort at unlocking the secrets.

It is inevitable that we, as mere humans, cannot see features of the environment that affect the way that birds select their habitats. Birds have more immediate needs that relate directly to food abundance and availability, energy, water and temperature balance, social contact, familiarity, predator detection, shelter and refuge from predation than the often complex aggregations of features we perceive on their behalf as 'their habitat'. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that it is urgent for us to understand the requirements of bird species from their surroundings as human development pressures, habitat loss and climate change conspire to accelerate our need to make best use of those habitats we can manage for the remaining populations that persist. This is what makes this book such a vital contribution to our knowledge.

Any review work must be worth more than the sum of the parts, and this is certainly the case with the vast majority of the chapters of this mighty review. Rob Fuller has structured a lively and well-organised content, starting with an exploration of the complexities of the pattern and process involved in examining habitat selection amongst birds in the first seven sections, which sets the scene for the rest of the book. This includes a particularly good review of how heterogeneity in European agricultural landscapes affects birds at multiple spatial scales, from sward types and nest sites, through field-level and farm scale pattern, to the effects of agri-environment schemes at the landscape and region scale. Also greatly entertaining is the chapter on spatial variation and temporal shifts in habitat use across Europe, by Tomasz Weslowski and Rob, which turn many British preconceived ideas about habitat selection on their heads with reference to those occupied by the same species elsewhere.

A magnificent set of case studies follow, written by a glitterati of experts in their field, including British moorlands (Murray Grant & James Pearce-Higgins), European Arctic-Alpine (Des Thompson et al.), reed beds and fens (Gillian Gilbert & Ken Smith), wet grassland waders (Malcolm Ausden & Mark Bolton), estuaries (Jenny Gill), non-estuarine coast (Niall Burton) and a hugely enjoyable review of woodlands (where Rob is on home territory and in superb form, along with his...