

Book Review

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Book Review

Wilson D.E., Lacher T.E. & Mittermeier R.A. (eds.) 2016: The Mammals of the World – Vol. 6, Lagomorphs and Rodents. *Lynx edicions, Barcelona, 988 pp., 60 colour plates, 737 photographs, 850 distribution maps. ISBN: 978-84-941892-3-4.*

This volume of the Handbook of Mammals of the World covers species of the Lagomorpha order and a part of species of the Rodentia order. Both groups represent sister lineages of Glires and this large taxon has played an important role in the overall history of recent mammalian radiation. The including of both lagomorphs and rodents into a single volume is quite reasonable in this respect.

The lagomorphs are a smaller mammalian order that includes 92 recognized extant species and two families. The rodents represent the most speciose order of mammals that includes about 2255 species (i.e. approximately 40 % of all living mammals) currently classified in 34 families. The exceptional species diversity of rodents makes it impossible to arrange all species in a single volume and the two largest families (Cricetidae and Muridae) will be included in the next volume of the Handbook.

The volume 6 follows the general arrangement and layout of the text and illustrations as used in the previous volumes, in spite of the fact that species of smaller body size are mostly dealt with. The introductory chapter explains attributes of lagomorphs and rodents related to their evolution, phylogeny, ecology and conservation. The early evolutionary history of both groups is briefly summarized with attention to the most important fossil records and their interpretations. Molecular and genomic approaches have deeply influenced our understanding of phylogenetic relationships of modern representatives of lagomorphs and rodents, and a scheme of phylogeny is applied in the systematic arrangement based on

current general consensus. Some of the systematic solutions may be modified in future but it is not probable that these changes will shake dramatically the present tree topology.

The systematic parts of the book are introduced by short characteristics of individual families with emphasis to their systematics, morphology, habitats and general habits, communication, food and feeding, reproduction, migration and social organization, relationships with humans, and conservation status. A similar structure is followed in sections devoted to individual species and readers can find there all necessary details about taxonomy, morphological appearance, ecology, behaviour, and conservation. The distribution ranges are shown in precise distribution maps attached to each species account. The illustrations are simply superb and exceptional. They are presented in photographs and colour drawings depicting the individual species created by the illustrator T. Llobet. Figures include even rare or poorly known species, and many of the photographs are really unique. The list of references is adequately comprehensive and contains all important works related to the topic.

This volume is certainly a great achievement in summarizing our knowledge of an important animal groups. It is a nice example of world-wide international cooperation, with 37 participating authors and many other contributors who provided photos, drawings and other graphic materials. The artwork editing is excellent and the overall level of scientific content is quite comparable to the perfect typographic layout of the book.

The book is a fundamental base for any continuing research and promotion of conservation issues in both groups of mammals. It can be recommended to all mammalogists, ecologists, conservationists as well as naturalists interested in animal life.

Jan Zima