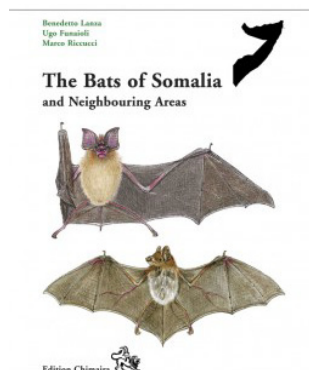


Observations, Discussions and Updates

Book review



Lanza, B., U. Funaioli and M. Riccucci. 2015. The Bats of Somalia and Neighbouring Areas. Edition Chimaira, Frankfurt am Main, 566 pages, 398 illustrations, 65 color drawings. ISBN 978-3-389973-447-8 (hb), € 78.00.

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Almost 50 years ago, Funaioli and Lanza (1968) published a short (4 pages) paper on some bats (5) from Somalia. Since then, their expertise on bats has been growing forever. The current collaboration - together with Marco Riccucci - resulted in an impressive 566 pages volume, covering 46 species occurring in Somalia and an additional 33 occurring in neighbouring areas. Besides the species profiles, separate chapters are dedicated to the genera, families, and the (sub)order(s). Each of these chapters contain sections on synonyms, common English and Italian names (most of the latter being introduced here), the derivation of the scientific names, taxonomy, composition and distribution [based on data from ACR 2010], distinctive characters, biology, and for those occurring in Somalia: records, biometric data and personal observations. Additionally, keys are presented for all of the taxa. For the Microchiroptera, an additional header is provided for echolocation calls.

The individual taxon profiles are complemented by an addendum section containing the profile for *Laephotis wintonii* and 32 distribution maps covering the species occurring in Somalia. Additionally a gazetteer for the localities mentioned (both Somali and other countries) is provided as well as an extensive list of references. The book ends with a separate contribution by Funaioli and Lanza on the geography of Somalia.

The largest trump of this book is the enormous amount of illustrations, both photographs and drawings. Some of the drawings have been copied/modified from previous publications (e.g. Rosevear, 1965), and are used to show the differences between the different taxa. Most of the drawings, however, are originals. The superbly detailed colour drawings of the complete animals by Ugo Funaioli will provide an enormous assistance in identifying the bats, as will the black-and-white drawings of the heads and skulls. One of the great advantages with the illustrations is that the animal on the drawing is almost always identified by its museum number, allowing specialist readers to crosscheck the identity of the animal illustrated.

Unfortunately, there are also a few negative points, one of them being the fact that no specific data are provided in the echolocation call sections (with the exception of *Pipistrellus deserti*). For all other sections, the authors repeat the information they retrieved from other publications. This is a missed opportunity, as it now forces the reader to turn to another publication to get this information. Another point is the rather selective list of synonyms that is provided in some cases, e.g. for *Scotophilus dinganii* "1958 *Scotophilus nigrita coreas*: Eisentraut (lapsus for *colias*)" is included, but not *Scotophilus nigrita colias* Thomas, 1904 itself. Additionally, there is also a more than fair share of typos and lapsus, e.g. *Rhinolophus eloquens* as the original name for the taxon, whereas it was actually described as *Rhinolophus Hildebrandti eloquens*, or using the same name as original name for *R. fumigatus*, or referring to *Scotoecus n. nigritus* in the taxonomy section of *Scotophilus nigritus*. The latter, by the way, is probably a justified emendation for *nigrita*, as the authors point out that *Scotophilus* is derived from a masculine

Greek substantive (p. 475). Another correction they point out (p. 236) is the type locality for *Nycteris aurita*, which I have been reporting erroneously as Kitui since Van Cakenberghe and De Vree (1993: 320). This just illustrates that errors are inevitable, especially if such a vast amount of data is compiled in a volume of this size by a limited number of people.

Overall, this book contains such a wealth of information that the errors should not be in the way of getting a copy of it, especially if you are into African bats.

Agnelli and Riccucci (2011: 3) end their introduction with the following statement: "Once we asked Bettino [Lanza] how the dickens he can do everything and also does it so well. He replied: 'Now I am aged, I need less sleep and then can devote more time to my work!'". I can only add to this that I hope there are more insomniacs around who can and will make similar books on bats in other countries.

Literature Cited

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Above: The authors (from left to right): Ugo Funaioli, Benedetto Lanza, and Marco Riccucci.