

BOOK REVIEW

Primates of the World: An Illustrated Guide

By Jean- Jacques Petter & François Desbordes, Translated by Robert Martin

Princeton University Press, Princeton, USA (New Jersey)

v + 208 pp., 2013, 72 color plates, 13 color illus., 7 line illus., 86 colour maps, \$29.95 (hardback)

ISBN: 9780691156958

Ramesh Boonratana

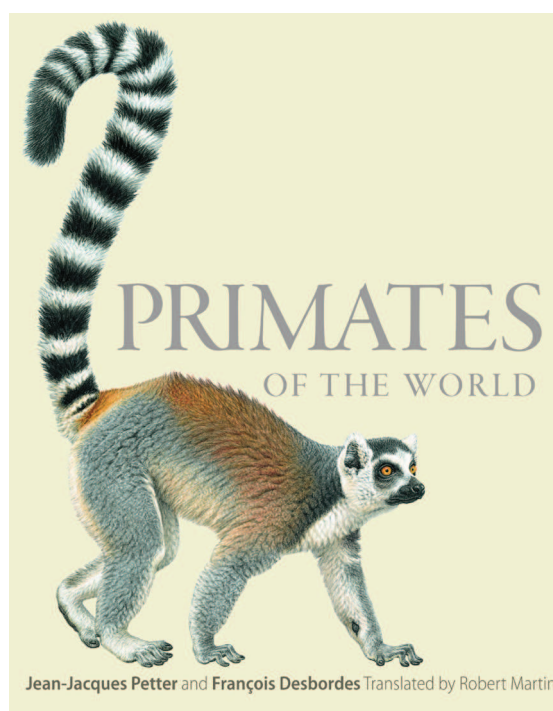
Mahidol University International College, 999 Buddhamonthon 4 Road, Salaya, Nakhon Pathom 73170, Thailand.

E-mail: ramesh.boonratana@mahidol.ac.th

The *Primates of the World: An Illustrated Guide*, first published in French in 2010 and later translated into English by Robert Martin in 2013, is reminiscent of the early books on natural history. The book's introductory chapters discuss primate origins and evolution, ecology and adaptations, social organization and behavior; and the rest of the book, about 75% of it, features 76 colour plates of non-human primates and 86 colour distribution maps, organized by Madagascar, South America, Asia and Africa, covering nearly 300 primate species.

However, with recent releases of the two must-have publications of “all” of the world's extant primates, namely the *Handbook of the Mammals of the World, Vol. 3: Primates* (Mittermeier et al., 2013) and *All the World's Primates* (Rowe & Myers, 2016), one cannot help but wonder what more can *Primates of the World: An Illustrated Guide* offer. By “all” here it means that despite how recent these publications are, yet there have been some new primate taxa described since the release of these publications – primarily due to taxonomic revisions based on the advances in our genetic studies. As of August 2016, the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group recognizes 502 species and 694 taxa (species and subspecies), and a few more have been recently described e.g. the Skywalker Hoolock Gibbon *Hoolock tianxing* (Fan et al., 2017). The *Primates of the World: An Illustrated Guide* covers nearly 300 species

So, what can a somewhat “outdated” *Primates of the World: An Illustrated Guide* offer?



The publication excels with its rich, stunningly impressive and detailed drawings and watercolor paintings of the non-human primates – images, postures, and expressions that cannot be simply captured by camera. It provides readers a visual appreciation of the diverse array of one of the more fascinating and magnificent groups of animals – primates – the very order by which we, the human species, belongs to. The *Primates of the World: An Illustrated Guide* also covers topics that include *In Search of Our Origins*, *The Precursors of Mammals*,

Evolution of Madagascar's Lemurs, The Role of the Forest and Primate Adaptation, Predators, Primate Territories and Social Organization, Primate Sociability and Recognition Signals, and Classification of Primates.

Although lacking detailed scientific information on members of the Order Primates, such as that provided in the *Handbook of the Mammals of the World, Vol. 3: Primates* (Mittermeier et al., 2013) and *All the World's Primates* (Rowe & Myers, 2016), yet the *Primates of the World: An Illustrated Guide* provides sufficient text to entice the layperson or amateur naturalists to learn, understand and appreciate our closest and remarkable living relatives better. In fact, the illustrations in *Primates of the World: An Illustrated Guide* more than compensate for the lack of detailed scientific information. The *Primates of the World: An Illustrated Guide* also provides brief descriptions of the key features for each genus, in the facing-pages, to accompany the full-page descriptions.

Moreover, despite the shortcomings, it can still serve as a beautiful, yet reasonably priced, resource on the Order Primates even to undergraduates and graduates, and definitely a must-have for all those who appreciate the diversity of primates and beauty of the natural world.



Gorillas. Illustration by Francois Desbordes.

References

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Howler Monkeys. Illustration by Francois Desbordes.