

Mammals of South America

**MAMMALS OF SOUTH AMERICA. By Rexford D. Lord.
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Rarely has a book intended for a general audience included so many excellent photographs of little-known and rarely seen mammals. Rex Lord's *Mammals of South America* is one of these uncommon exceptions. South America has a rich and diverse, but poorly known, mammalian fauna; this book provides a glimpse of many species otherwise known only by specialists. The front materials include the Preface consisting of an overview and credits; a one-page section titled "Photography and Mammals," which explains Lord's preference for photographs of faces as an aid to recognizing groups of mammals; and a brief but informative four-page section titled Biogeography. The next 140 pages consist of 13 sections, each corresponding to a mammalian order. The text briefly covers general natural history for each order and family. Interesting comments on parasites and diseases are interspersed in the text and reflect the author's background in public health and tropical medicine. The final 48 pages constitute a table listing species and their distribution in South America. The taxa listed in this table follow *Mammal Species of the World*, 3rd ed. (Wilson and Reeder, eds., The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

Photographs form the structure of the book and are lacking only for shrews. Mammalian diversity in South America is highest among rodents, with over 590 species known and the order is represented by 53 photographs of 46 species. The next most diverse group is the bats with approximately 140 species currently recognized. That over half of the bats (77 species) are represented by 81 photographs also reflects Lord's great interest in these flying mammals and the considerable time and effort he devoted to photographing them. The nearly three pages of text on vampire bats further reflect his experience with these blood feeders. Although whales and porpoises are generally discussed in the text, only the two river dolphins are listed in the table. Otherwise the rich marine mammal fauna is not included; perhaps portraits of most marine mammals lack the appeal provided by their land-based brethren.

However interesting and potentially useful one may find this book, it would have benefited from more rigorous review, proofing, and editing. Avoiding errors in any book is nearly

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impossible. Nevertheless, among the most obvious is the misidentification of the bat labeled *Enchisthenes harti* on page 91, the inclusion of two photographs of the same bat (*Platyrrhinus umbratus*) each with a different name on page 92, and the misspelling of *Anoura latidens*, *Lonchophylla bokermanni*, *Lophostoma carrikeri*, *Lepus europaeus*, *Oryctolagus*, and *Potos* in the table. Also in the table, the generic name *Sciurillus* applies only to the first squirrel; the remainder represent the genus *Sciurus*. The number of errors and anthropomorphisms in the text is disappointing. Among those I found particularly jarring are “sloths find it inappropriate to relieve themselves while hanging from branches” (page 17), that rodent incisors have “internal enamel” (page 42), “there are many tree species that have concentrated on bats to disperse their seeds” (page 100), and “forelimbs [of cetaceans] modified to act as oars” (page 137). I would also point out that while the black squirrels in Washington, DC truly are melanistic, the original stock was imported from Canada by Theodore Roosevelt. The suggestion is made on page 87 that the bat falcons prey on vampire bats, but then we learn that vampire bats begin to leave their roosts an hour or two after dark, long after these diurnal raptors have stopped flying. Most of these and other lapses and questionable statements could have been avoided if the text had been carefully reviewed by a mammalogist. Nevertheless, anyone interested in but unfamiliar with South American mammals should find this book fascinating.