A Wiki-based Key to Garden and Village Birds

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Abstract — A Wiki-based Key to Garden and Village Birds is available in two versions: a dichotomous, hyperlinked and printable version, and as step-by-step identification version. It is supported by jKey Player in English, Slovenian, Spanish, Romanian and German.

Index Terms — birds, Aves, key, identification, wiki, jKey Player.

1 INTRODUCTION

One of the first steps in discovering and understanding biodiversity is to identify the organisms around us. The study of biodiversity, and in particular the identification of organisms, is becoming part of educational curricula in primary and secondary schools and in many University courses across Europe.

After Gutenberg, information useful for identifying organisms was printed on paper. The constraints of a paper-printed text have forced most authors to organise information according to the hierarchical scheme of biological classification. Computer-assisted keys, on the contrary, allow us to identify organisms without necessarily using the characters of the classification in the biological system. Classification and identification belong to two different operational processes. Classification is the job of taxonomists, identification can be fun for anybody [1].

There are many identification tools available online, based on different platforms. One of the possible platforms is the Wiki. The advantage of wiki-based keys is that a community of users can work together in constructing, improving and enriching them in a collaborative way.

In the European project KeyToNature, two tools for creating and running wiki-based keys were developed: the jKey Editor and the jKey Player. The JavaScript based jKey Player is supporting interactive use, tracking and annotating previous decisions, and allows all decision steps to be easily revisable. The revision capability is especially useful in classroom use, allowing the quick identification of erroneous decisions, discussing the reasons for these, and continuing without

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restarting the entire identification process. Additional functionalities like toggling the display of secondary text and images, and enlarging images on click, make the keys more user-friendly. The complementary web-based editing tool jKey Editor allows a form-based editing of the identification keys, which simplifies creating, modifying, pedagogically adapting, or translating existing keys [2].

2 Key to Garden and Village Birds

The Key to Garden and Village Birds is a wiki-based identification tool, which includes text, pictures, drawings and sounds [4]. Original recordings of bird sounds are also displayed, which were stored in the Slovenian Wildlife Sound Archive, housed in the Slovenian Museum of Natural History (PMSL) in Ljubljana, Slovenia [3].

The key can be used both in a dichotomous hyperlinked printable version (Fig. 1) or in a step-by-step identification version (Fig. 2) supported by jKey Player. The target audience are pupils in primary and secondary schools, with the pedagogical goal to observe the birds and listen their singing and calling. Important was the contribution of the wiki-community, who translated the key into English [4], Slovenian [5], Spanish [6], Romanian [7] and German [8].

Fig. 1 – Dichotomous hyperlinked printable version of the wiki-based Key to Garden and Village Birds [4].
Fig. 2 – Step-by-step identification version of the wiki-based Key to Garden and Village Birds with an annotated step of uncertainty [4].

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REFERENCES

