reef and shore fishes of the south pacific: new caledonia to tahiti and the pitcairn islands. john e. randall. 2005. university of hawai‘i press, honolulu, hawaii. isbn 0-82248-2698-1. 707 p. $75.00 (cloth).—the publication of john (jack) randall's latest book follows a long history of producing faunal works that will serve as major references for years to come. this latest book is a complement to his fishes of the great barrier reef and coral sea published in 1996 (randall, allen, and steen), and together the two books allow for the identification of most of the species found south of the equator in the tropical pacific ocean. because of its size and weight (7 lbs.), however, this is not a book that one can easily take into the field.

the book contains accounts of 1,496 fish species, with more than 2,000 color photographs. the author states that the purpose of his book “...is to provide for the identification of the fishes that snorkelers or scuba divers may see on insular reefs or in adjacent habitats or that fishermen might catch while fishing inshore.” the book does not cover many of the small fishes (such as bythitids) that live deep in the reef or many of the sand-burrowing eels. the illustrations include photographs of freshly caught specimens taken above water using a technique developed by randall many years ago (randall, 1961), underwater photographs of living fishes, and underwater photographs of small, cryptic species recently killed by rotenone.

in terms of introductory material, randall provides three pages of text and two pages of labeled photographs (external features of fishes) describing fish anatomy and explaining various counts and measurements. the pages of external features of fishes are the same as in his great barrier reef book. there is, however, no guide to the families provided as in earlier books. a six-page glossary of technical terms found in the text is presented at the back of the book.

an introduction is given for each fish family and order, usually listing the key characters, size of the group, major references, and often a summary of their biology. next to the photograph of each fish species is a text block giving the common name, scientific name with authorship, and a listing of characters. typically fin-ray, scale, and gill-raker counts are given along with body depth and various other characters diagnostic of the species. information also is given on color, maximum size, distribution, and habitat; occasionally information is provided on biology. it would have been helpful to have comments on how to separate a species from others that are similar, but size restrictions may have prevented this.

some workers may take exception to randall’s use of generic names for various species where he believes current usage is incorrect. for example, rainford’s goby is called koumansetta rainfordi whitley, 1940 with the comment “this and seychellesa hectori smith are usually classified in amblygobius but are shifted here to koumansetta whitley. the species of amblygobius have a larger mouth (maxilla extending posterior to front of eye), obtusely rounded snout, a pelvic frenum, and the longest dorsal spines not the first or the second; they are benthic and take refuge in burrows.” in a second example, randall recognizes the subgenera of apogon in fraser (1972) as genera based on a doctoral dissertation (bergman, 2004). due