

Briefly Noted

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Caribbean Triad

Field Guide to the Birds of Cuba.—Orlando H. Garrido and Arturo Kirkconnell. 2000. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York. 253 pp., 51 color plates, 662 drawings, 142 gray and white range maps, 2 appendices. ISBN 0-8014-8631-9. \$29.95 (paper), ISBN 0-8014-3718-0. \$59.95 (cloth).

This is the first field guide that exclusively and comprehensively covers the relatively unknown avifauna of Cuba. This useful guide covers all 351 species of birds (21 of which are endemic) found on the island of Cuba. Each species is illustrated with one or more color drawings (sexes and immature forms are usually included when different), which are grouped together on 51 plates in the middle of the volume. There are 662 drawings in all. The introduction provides very brief summaries of Cuban geography, climate, and geology, as well as the paleontology, zoogeography, migration, habitats, and conservation of the island's bird populations. It is a shame that so little space was given to these topics, and the authors, both native Cubans, missed an important opportunity to educate their non-Cuban readers. Useful sections discuss birdwatching in Cuba, describe the island's habitats, and offer interesting insights; I learned, for example, that 51% of the native plants are endemic. Species descriptions include such standard information as description, related species, range, status, habitat, nesting habits, voice, and food. Illustrations by Roman F. Company are of a relatively high quality, well reproduced, and helpful for identifying the species. The book will be very useful for birders and ornithologists visiting Cuba as well as those who want to know what species occur there. For a more in-depth review, see Wege (2001, *Ibis* 143:506–507).

The Birds of the Cayman Islands.—Patricia E. Bradley. 2000. BOU Checklist Series:19. British Ornithologists' Union, Tring, UK. 253 pp., 8 figures, 71 color plates, 9 tables, 10 appendices. ISBN 0-907446-23-X. £35 (cloth).

This book provides a concise and valuable summary of the available information on the avifauna of the three Cayman Islands. The book's introduction contains an overview to the history, geology, geography, climate, and vegetation of this resort destination. The author then recounts the history of ornithological discovery on the islands, which began with expeditions funded by Charles B. C. Cory in 1886. There are also sections on paleornithology, zoogeography, population ecology, migration (79% of the species are Neotropical migrants), and introduced birds. The extensive introduction concludes with a discussion of Cayman Islands conservation. The islands, like the Galapagos Islands, were uninhabited prior to European discovery. Today, only a small amount of the large, pristine mangrove swamps is protected. Economic success and its resulting commercial development are a major threat to the islands' avi-

fauna. The bulk of the book is devoted to accounts for 222 species that have been found in the country. Brief descriptions of species range, habitat, and population status on each of the three islands are followed by more detailed occurrence and, for 49 species, breeding records. Lists of museum specimens located at 14 museums worldwide complete each account. Included are 71 color plates that show habitats, aerial views, 17 bird species, and relief and habitat maps of each island. Plates are well produced and most bird photographs are quite good. However, species names in captions do not necessarily follow names given in accounts (e.g., plates 46 and 47 show "Cayman Parrot," and "Cayman Brac Parrot," respectively, but the account calls them "Cuban Parrots"). This well written and documented book provides a valuable background on Cayman Island avifauna and detailed occurrence and breeding records, but would probably be of little general use in the field. For a more in-depth review, see Raffele (2002, *Ibis* 144:164).

Where to Watch Birds in Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean.—Nigel Wheatley and David Brewer. 2001. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey. 436 pp., 50 line drawings, 100+ black and white range maps. ISBN 0-691-09515-9. \$19.95 (paper).

This invaluable traveler's companion provides information on the best places to birdwatch in each country in the region. Entries for each country begin with brief information on the country, getting around, accommodations and food, health and safety, climate and seasons, habitats, conservation, and characteristics of the avifauna. The authors then turn to the meat of the book, which is detailed information on a handful of the hottest birding areas in each country. They include lists of endemic and specialty species expected at each site, as well as other wildlife species of note. The authors also provide authoritative information on access to the area and often tell the best spots in those areas to observe certain birds. For some areas, useful maps show roads and trails. The authors end each site description with limited but useful information on nearby overnight accommodations. Lists of helpful bird and nature books end each country's account. The writing is concise and informative, but not without interest or humor. For example, when encouraging visitors not to shy from riding horses to Rara Avis in Costa Rica, the authors note that "... the horses are all torpid, somnolent beasts apparently well beyond pensionable age and not in any way shaped for sportive tricks. Just sit on top and watch the countryside pass by (rather slowly)" (p. 90). This book is particularly valuable for birders and nature travelers planning visits to the region and is small and light enough to take along (or dare I say to tear out the several pages covering the countries to be visited). It is of limited interest to ornithologists seeking detailed information on the avifauna of the region. Ornithologists seeking detailed information on the region's avifauna should keep close at hand their copy of Howell and Webb (*A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America*, Oxford University Press, 1995), Ridgely and Gwynne (*A Guide to the Birds of Panama*, Princeton University Press, 1995), or other good regional field guides.—WILLIAM I. BOARMAN, Western Ecological Research Center, U.S. Geological Survey, San Diego, CA 92123, e-mail: william.boarman@usgs.gov