

FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF SURINAME—Arie L. Spaans, Otte H. Ottema, and Jan Hein J.M. Ribot. 2019. Koninklijke Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands. 642 pp. ISBN 978-90-04-35231-5. \$55.00.

Years ago, a prized find for my personal library was a lightly used copy of *Birds of Surinam* by François Haverschmidt (1968). Richly illustrated by Paul Barruel, this oversized volume nearly screamed out the bright colors, wild diversity, and unique families of tropical birdlife.

Sitting on the Atlantic coast of northern South America, Suriname is of course not technically a Caribbean country. But it is nearby and it shares certain affinities and some of its birdlife with Caribbean nations, so we embrace Suriname as our neighbor!

Haverschmidt's (1968) accomplishments aside, his book was definitely not a field guide, nor, with "only" 602 species represented, was it complete. With the publication of Spaans *et al.*'s (2019) *Field Guide to the Birds of Suriname*, we now have a high-quality guide specifically designed for field use.

First and foremost, *Field Guide to the Birds of Suriname* is a tremendous accomplishment! With a whopping 751 species (765 when counting unique subspecies) in Suriname, the sheer number and diversity of birds may be exhilarating for the birdwatcher, but must be daunting for the author of a field guide.

The book opens with useful and well-illustrated sections on topography, climate, geology, and geomorphology. In addition, a thorough section on biogeography includes excellent descriptions and photographs of 38 unique habitats. Next come tables of interesting species that list, for example, northern migrants, endemic species of the Guiana Shield, and vagrants. The authors address conservation through a discussion of reserves and protected areas in Suriname, as well as a short presentation on the legal protections for birds and threats posed by hunting and the cage bird trade. I did not find, however, any lists of the threatened or endangered species in the country.

The species accounts follow a fairly standard format, giving a variety of names used as well as size, field descriptions, voice, similar species, behavior, residency status, distribution, and relative abundance. Distribution and abundance are addressed in a small table at the conclusion of each species account, with relative abundance represented by one of five codes in each of six broad biogeographical zones. I find the species accounts to be unusually well done—they are complete without being over-

ly detailed, and are obviously written by people who know the birds, their habits, and their behavior.

The greatest weakness of the guide, I'm afraid, is the plates. Created by the prolific artist (and author) Ber van Perlo, the illustrations seemed to me to have a somewhat uneven style. Many appear overly "sketchy," which may contribute to a relative lack of distinction among similar species. Both males and females are usually illustrated, and occasionally birds in flight are depicted, but immature and non-breeding plumages are shown only rarely.

The artist's style is less of an issue, though, than the more annoying choice to shrink the size of each figure and to omit any text on the plates (or their facing page) beyond species name, sex, and species account number. Of course, I realize that with such a large avifauna, certain decisions must be made by the authors, designers, and publishers to save space and reduce the size of the book; sacrifices must be made. But these particular sacrifices affect the quality of the illustrations and reduce the utility of the guide.

For those living in Suriname or planning a trip there, this field guide correctly emphasizes the potential value of ecotourism to the country and offers a lengthy section on where to watch birds in Suriname. Possible birding sites are scattered across the country, with many easily accessed from Paramaribo, the capital of Suriname. Maps are not included in the site descriptions, but there are many tips on species to look for, site access, and accommodations, as well as some useful websites for planning trips.

Overall, I find that the authors of *Field Guide to the Birds of Suriname* have done an admirable job of pulling together an immense amount of information on the vast avifauna of Suriname, and have presented it in an accessible and attractive manner. I recommend the book to anyone traveling to Suriname, or anyone else who would like to vicariously appreciate the splendid diversity of birds the country has to offer. We are lucky to have this guide.

Literature Cited

Haverschmidt, F. 1968. *Birds of Surinam*. Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh, UK.

—Steven C. Latta

Department of Conservation and Field Research, National Aviary, Allegheny Commons West, Pittsburgh, PA 15212, USA; e-mail: steven.latta@aviary.org