

## BOOK REVIEW

THE BIRD-LIFE OF MUSTIQUE IN THE GRENADINES.—Michael Paice and Rob Speirs. 2009. The Mustique Company Ltd., Mustique Island, St. Vincent and the Grenadines. 221 pp. \$42.00. Available at [www.basilsbar.com](http://www.basilsbar.com) or [www.basilsmustique.com](http://www.basilsmustique.com).

Just a few decades ago very few illustrated field guides were available for identifying the birds of the Caribbean. Nowadays an amply illustrated field guide is available for most of the larger islands and island groups, and even for some of the smaller islands. Amazingly one tiny island, comprising an area of only 5.7 km<sup>2</sup>, now boasts its own spiffy field guide to the birds. Furthermore, it is not an island on the well-beaten tourist path; instead, it is one of the most exclusive islands in the world, an exotic retreat for some of the world's richest and most famous celebrities, and virtually impossible to visit—unless you happen to be blessed with wealth or the ability to impress the celebrities. It is the island of Mustique, one of several volcanic islets of the Grenadines emerging from the sea floor between St. Vincent and Grenada.

Michael Paice, “the Birdman of Mustique,” is an accomplished musician who has been visiting Mustique each winter since 1997 to perform for the annual charity Mustique Blues Festival. Rob Speirs was resident on Mustique from 2005–2010 and has developed a talent for photographing birds. Fortunately for ornithology, the two British compatriots teamed up to produce a charming little field guide to the birds of Mustique.

The spiral-bound field guide is small, measuring 14×19 cm, which makes it easy to carry in the field. It begins with the obligatory introductory chapters, which are generously illustrated with color photographs. In the Preface (p. 1), the authors state that the book “aims to inform novices and experts alike on the birds of the island, and the Grenadines as a whole, and to facilitate their identification...it is hoped that this book will be of benefit to local people who hold the key to nature conservation in the region.” Subsequent sections describe the ornithological history and habitats of the island, followed by information on how to identify birds and an explanation of the book's organization. A couple of maps illustrate Mustique's location within the Grenadines and the topographical features of the island.

The bulk of the book comprises species accounts for 108 species of birds that have been recorded on the island. Each species account includes a description of its status in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, range, description, voice, diet, and anecdotal comments. The descriptions are very detailed and helpful, as is the rest of the text. Most species are depicted by several excellent color photographs taken almost entirely on Mustique by Rob Speirs. Where warranted for identification purposes, some species are allotted even more coverage, such as Sandwich Tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*), which has no less than seven color photographs. Of particular ornithological interest are photographs of the local races of Wilson's Plover (*Charadrius wilsonia cinnamominus*; found mostly south of St. Vincent), Sandwich Tern (*T. s. eurygnatha*; southern Caribbean and South America), Antillean Crested Hummingbird (*Orthorhyncus cristatus emigrans*; only in Grenada and Grenadines), and local Caribbean species such as Grenada Flycatcher (*Myiarchus nugator*). An additional dozen “species that have probably or possibly been seen, and others which are thought likely to occur,” are listed on p. 191.

A couple of unique sections atypical of a field guide appear near the end of the book. On pp. 189–190, the authors point out that “there are sometimes individual birds which don't look how the books say they should.” Photos provide four classic examples: a Mangrove Cuckoo (*Coccyzus minor*) molting its tail feathers, a Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*) with bright red bill and legs, and apparently melanistic individuals of a Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) and a Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*). On pp. 192–194 the authors present keys to the identification of three sets of similar species: the white herons and egrets, small sandpipers, and terns.

A couple of sections near the back of the book explain why it is important to preserve habitats and species by protecting them from encroachment by human activities and introduced species.

In summary, the book is a delightfully illustrated introduction to the birds of Mustique. The island's residents are clearly the targeted audience. As pointed out on p. 1, the residents “who aren't seasoned birdwatchers are likely to have some difficulty in ploughing through the text, range maps, and regional checklists” of the available regional field guides,

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making this book more “user friendly.” However, the authors correctly surmise that the more advanced birders will enjoy the “collection of new photographs of the many interesting and sometimes rare or unexpected birds species.”

Further details on the occurrence of these rare species, along with a more technical summary on the avifauna of Mustique, were recently published in the previous issue of this journal (Paice and Speirs 2010).—FLOYD E. HAYES, *Department of*

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## RECENT ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE FROM THE CARIBBEAN

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Readers are invited to submit literature citations that should be highlighted in this section to STEVEN C. LATTA, *National Aviary, Allegheny Commons West, Pittsburgh, PA 15212, USA; e-mail: steven.latta@aviary.org.*

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