

BOOK REVIEW

CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS OF ARUBA, CURAÇAO AND BONAIRE, SOUTH CARIBBEAN.—T. J. Prins, J. H. Reuter, A. O. Debrot, J. Wattel, and V. Nijman. 2009. *Ardea* 97(2):137–268. ISSN: 0373-2266. €20 available from Netherlands Ornithologists' Union (www.ardeajournal.nl).

There has been a series of publications documenting the avifauna of the islands of Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire—formerly known as the Netherlands Antilles. (They are still affiliated with Holland, so I and the monograph's authors retain that useful term.) Spaced 75 km apart, they range east to west from 30 km off the Paraguana Peninsula (Aruba) to 87 km north of mainland Venezuela (Bonaire). All are xeric with little elevational relief. K. H. Voous initiated their ornithological study with a detailed taxonomic monograph (1957) complemented by field guides illustrated with color photographs (1955, 1983), a formal Checklist (1965), and finally a last supplement to his 1983 guide (1985). The present publication, the first in 24 years, is best viewed as a concise updating of Voous (1983, 1985), so anyone seriously interested in deep analysis of this avifauna should have Voous (1957, 1983) at hand along with Prins *et al.* (2009).

This slender 132-page, hard-cover, stand-alone number of *Ardea* includes, in 4 dispersed signatures, 94 color plates of maps and on-ground habitat shots (1–32) plus endemics, residents, migrants, and vagrants (33–94). No dates, locations, or (with two exceptions) subspecies are provided in their captions, and the “Striated Heron” (Plate 39) is actually a Green Heron—surely a labelling error predating their recent split. Especially useful are images of Black-bellied Whistling Duck (*discolor*), Cayenne Tern, Yellow-shouldered Parrot, Brown-throated Parakeet (*arubensis*, *pertinax*), Burrowing Owl (*arubensis*), and Carib Grackle (*lugubris*). Readers may find the species-level taxonomy a bit puzzling until they realize the standard followed was Dickinson (2003), which explains some odd English names (Stilt-Sandpiper) and unexpected species lumpings (Greater Flamingo, Black-winged Stilt, Kentish Plover, Common Snipe).

After a 12-page introduction addressing the islands' topography and avian populations, the species accounts (pp. 157–244) comprise the bulk of the book. For the three islands combined, 280 spe-

cies are recognized, with the similar resident (55–57) and migrant (166–168) totals for each of the islands showing compositional differences reflecting their positions and topography. An upbeat note is provided by only five or six established aliens: Rock Pigeon, Rose-ringed Parakeet, House Sparrow, Village and Baya Weavers, and Saffron Finch (a possible natural colonizer). The species accounts are telegraphically concise, running only 8–20 lines with most in the 8–12 range. It is refreshing to find no so-called “hypothetical list”—these authors clearly understand the importance of incorporating all significant sight records, unpublished photographs, etc., if an accurate avifaunal picture is to be presented. Repositories and years of important island specimens are given, as are complete metadata for all records mentioned: location, date, number, observer/source. But: have there truly been no banded birds recovered on the Netherlands Antilles? And are there no outstanding research needs or unresolved questions about their birds?

A few subspecies are endemic: Eared Dove (*vina-ceorufa*), Brown-throated Parakeet (*arubensis*; *pertinax*; *xanthogenia*), Barn Owl (*bargei* + an undescribed subspecies), Burrowing Owl (*arubensis*), Northern Scrub Flycatcher (*pallens*); Pearly-eyed Thrasher (*bonariensis*), Golden Warbler (*rufopileata*), Yellow Oriole (*curasoensis*), Bananaquit (*uro-pygialis*, *bonariensis*), Rufous-collared Sparrow (*insularis*), Grasshopper Sparrow (*caribaeus*), and Black-faced Grassquit (*sharpei*). In a class by itself is Caribbean Elaenia, whose local breeding race is considered to be *riisii*—otherwise breeding only in the Virgin Islands and Antigua! All of these taxa would benefit from deep molecular–morphological–behavioral comparisons with conspecifics, and species limits within several (Barn and Burrowing Owls, Golden Warbler, Bananaquit, Carib Grackle) are in particular need of attention. A concluding list of nine non-breeding “Escaped Cage-birds” contains several species that arguably reached these islands naturally (Orinoco Goose and possibly several parrots), given those that are known to have done so already.

Of other breeding species, Southern Lapwing, Shiny Cowbird, Great-tailed and *lugubris* Carib Grackles are now in the process of colonizing; House Crow appears to have tried and failed; a small population of Common Terns (yes, Com-

mon—as well as Roseate) has been breeding on all 3 islands for at least 50 years; the center of abundance and likely origin of “boreal” Cayenne Terns (*S. [sandvicensis?] eurygnatha*) is located here (an austral population may or may not be closely related); and the endemic Burrowing Owl and Grasshopper Sparrow are barely holding their own.

One of the more enduring enigmas in Western Hemisphere migration study has been the species composition of those southbound migrants crossing the Caribbean from the Yucatan–Cuba–Hispaniola axis directly to northern South America. Little to no systematic work has addressed the question, so haphazard data have had to be gleaned, and patterns inferred, from adventitious observations at scattered sites like Providencia, San Andres, and the Venezuelan islands from Isla de Aves east to Los Testigos. The Netherlands Antilles for their part have detected quite a few North American species that are excessively infrequent (or even “officially” unknown) in South America, like Mallard (2–4×); Greater White-fronted Goose; Bufflehead; Double-crested Cormorant; Northern Harrier; American Avocet; Piping Plover (1–3×); Dunlin (5×); Red-necked (3×) and Red Phalaropes; Great Black-backed (2–3×) and Bonaparte’s (4×) Gulls; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (14+×); Philadelphia Vireo (3×); Eastern Kingbird (5×); Cedar Waxwing; Northern Wheatear (2×); Brown Thrasher; European Starling (2–3×); Wood Thrush; Prairie (2+×), Palm (6+×), Magnolia (8×), Black-throated Blue (8×), and Worm-eating Warblers (2×); Common Yellowthroat (12+×, small flocks); White-throated Sparrow; Blue Grosbeak; and Indigo Bunting (15+×, overwintering).

Respectable numbers and species have reached the Netherlands Antilles from the south, including these austral trans-equatorial or intra-South American migrants: Gray-capped and Guira Cuckoos; Small-billed Elaenia; Cattle Tyrant; Streaked Flycatcher; Tropical Kingbird (*melancholicus*); Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*savana*); White-winged and Chilean Swallows; and Brown-chested Martin. Closer, but still surprising given the open-water crossings involved, are dispersers (and potential colonizers?) from adjacent South America like White-faced Whistling-Duck; Comb Duck; Wood Stork; White-faced Ibis; Boat-billed Heron; Pinnated Bittern; Least Bittern; Whistling Heron; Black Vulture; Yellow-headed Caracara; Limpkin; Wattled Jacana; Large-billed Tern; Black Skimmer (*cinerascens*); Green-rumped Parrotlet; Greater Ani; Oilbird; Ru-

fous-breasted Hermit; White-necked Jacobin; Amazon and Ringed Kingfishers; Lesser Elaenia; Vermilion Flycatcher; Southern Rough-winged Swallow; Oriole-blackbird; Yellow-hooded Blackbird; Red-breasted Blackbird; Eastern Meadowlark; Blue-black Grassquit; Swallow-tanager (supporting genuine vagrancy to the Cayman Islands); and Red-legged Honeycreeper.

Unanticipated seabirds include Bulwer’s Petrel (4×) and Great Frigatebird, the former, at least, a potential colonizer. Unique are a post-hurricane Greater Antillean Grackle (if correctly identified) that remained for 3 yr; a July male Western Tanager; and a December male Black-headed Grosbeak—three species otherwise unrecorded for South America. The common theme is that many of the above taxa are not usually considered migrants or over-water dispersers, yet the Netherlands Antilles, just like Barbados and other strategically located islands, have yielded previously unknown patterns of regular movement in the course of quotidian observations.

In closing, this essential book packages much information of interest to students of island, West Indian, South American, and even North American ornithology, and is a fitting tribute to its dedicatee, Karel H. Voous.—P. A. BUCKLEY, *211 Meadow Tree Farm Road, Saunderstown RI 02874 USA*; e-mail: *pab387@cox.net*.

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