

BOOK REVIEWS

PUERTO RICO'S BIRDS IN PHOTOGRAPHS. 3rd edn.—Mark W. Oberle. 2010. Editorial Humanitas, Seattle, WA. 136 pp. ISBN: 978-0-9650104. \$29.95.

Mark Oberle, a professor at the University of Washington School of Public Health, deserves a standing ovation for assembling a monumental album of photographs of the birds of Puerto Rico. Oberle has now published three English editions (digital in 1999 for 1st, print in 2000 with revisions in 2003 and 2006 for 2nd, and print in 2010 for 3rd) and two Spanish editions (print in 2003 and digital in 2006 for the 1st, print in 2006 for the 2nd) of this unique photographic guide. It is not intended to be an identification field guide, although it serves the purpose well for most birders. Instead, it is designed to be a non-technical and amply illustrated introduction to the diversity and natural history of the island's avifauna.

The 3rd English edition is a compact book, measuring 13.8 × 21.5 × 0.7 cm. It begins with a brief account of the book's evolution followed by a summary of the island's avifauna, including brief sections on biogeography, evolution, extinction, a pithy section on conservation, and an explanation for using the book.

The bulk of the book consists of accounts for 191 species, including all of the breeding bird species, and many of the migrant bird species occurring in Puerto Rico. The species accounts vary greatly in length, averaging longer for the endemic species and more familiar resident species. Each account provides a brief description along with a variable amount of natural history information. Because the text is written in full sentences as a single paragraph with a minimum of abbreviations and no literature citations, it is easier to read than many bird guides that break up information into sections or cite literature references. The number of photographs per species ranges from one (many species) to five for the Antillean Mango (*Anthracothonax dominicus*), with an average of more than two photos per species. Some accounts include photos of nests, eggs, or chicks. All 414 color photos are of excellent quality, although some are rather small.

The book ends with a list of 13 organizations that support birding and conservation on the island, a bibliography of 20 relevant publications, a map of

Puerto Rico (depicting selected areas) and nearby islands, a species index, and an abbreviated index of English names for bird groups.

As promised on both the front and back covers, the book comes with a CD-ROM, which is nestled in a pouch glued to the inside back cover. The CD-ROM is loaded with 430 audio clips and more than 2,800 photos (contributed by more than 100 photographers) of more than 400 species (including some non-Puerto Rican species), but I quickly learned that it wasn't easy to use—unless, of course, you follow the instructions printed (in both English and Spanish) directly on the CD-ROM, which I failed to do. Instead, I browsed the folders of the CD-ROM and discovered myriad photo and audio files titled with bewildering alphanumeric codes, making it difficult to find a particular species. Eventually, after browsing through the folders, I noticed a file not in a folder titled "home." Eureka! Had I followed the instructions printed on the CD-ROM, it would have been the first file to be opened.

The "home" file explains in detail how to use the CD-ROM. It also includes text from the introductory and closing sections of the book, a few brief articles on birding by Georgann Schmalz, and bird-finding information for southwestern Puerto Rico.

The CD-ROM includes html files with expanded species accounts and additional photos for each species. The photos are low-resolution images ranging in size from 7–295 kb. Some photos depict habitat and a few that I noticed in the folder seemed out of place, such as a Horseshoe Crab (*Limulus polyphemus*) and a Moose (*Alces alces*).

The book and the CD-ROM both provide an excellent summary of the birds of Puerto Rico. Many photos of Puerto Rico's birds are now freely available online, so for me the most interesting part of the book was the rich amount of natural history information. I highly recommend its purchase by anybody interested specifically in the birds of Puerto Rico. The book is also of interest to those interested in the broader Caribbean region. And when you insert the CD-ROM in your computer, spare yourself the confusion of browsing the files by either following the directions on the CD-ROM or simply opening up the file labeled "home."—FLOYD E. HAYES, *Department of Biology, Pacific Union College, 1 Angwin Ave., Angwin, CA 94508, USA*; e-mail: floyd_hayes@yahoo.com.