

BOOK REVIEWS

STUDIES IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO ORNITHOLOGY HONOURING RICHARD FFRENCH. —Edited by Floyd E. Hayes and Stanley A. Temple. 2002. Occasional Paper #11 of the Department of Life Sciences, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad. 209 pp. ISBN: 976-620-167-6. \$25, available from Mr. Dexter Ottley at bshop@books.uwi.tt. Website: www.geocities.com/floyd_hayes/occasionalpaper_contents

As a young birdwatcher, two books always grabbed my imagination—as much for their author's names as for their exotic avifauna. James Bond's *Birds of the West Indies* (1961) and Richard ffrench's *A guide to the birds of Trinidad and Tobago* (1973) were both early, landmark publications which helped to popularize bird study and provide a foundation for avian conservation in the Caribbean. From 1958-1985, Richard ffrench taught school in Trinidad. Though not trained as an ornithologist, birds were clearly his passion, and he spent countless hours in the field as a Master Bander and a careful observer of birdlife. Through 96 books, book chapters, journal articles, and notes, ffrench made tremendous contributions to our understanding of the distribution, natural history, and behavior of Caribbean birds. He also promoted natural history and conservation activities in Trinidad and Tobago, was a founding member of the Asa Wright Nature Centre, and was active in national and regional ornithological organizations. In a wonderful tribute to Richard ffrench, the editors of *Studies in Trinidad and Tobago ornithology honouring Richard ffrench* have collected 26 papers concerning ornithology in Trinidad and Tobago and the Eastern Caribbean. These papers are organized into five sections, including: I. Richard ffrench (3 papers); II. Taxonomy and Morphological Variation (3 papers); III. Faunistics and Population Ecology (6 papers); IV. Ecology, Behaviour and Conservation (8 papers); and V. Short Communications (6 papers).

In a tribute such as this, the breadth and depth of the papers is rich and fascinating. For example, in Part I, beyond the standard summaries of the accomplishments of ffrench, I enjoyed the editors' selection of "Soldado Rock" as excerpted from *A naturalist in Trinidad* (Worth 1967). In this recounting of an expedition to a small island southwest of Trinidad, we find Richard ffrench accompanying a team of virus hunters as they collect ticks from seabirds. In a won-

derfully entertaining story, so atypical of ornithological journals, we learn something about Brown Noddy (*Anous stolidus*) and Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*) nesting behavior, the biology of ticks, the adventure of field biology, and most appropriately, something of the character and passion of Richard ffrench.

Part II contains some of the research highlights of the journal. In "Natal pterylosis of two Trinidadian ovenbirds (Furnariidae)," Charles Collins and Tamara Araya describe the *neossoptiles* or the number and pattern of natal downs. In a data-rich paper, Floyd Hayes describes geographic variation and sexual dimorphism in the White-tailed Sabrewing (*Campylopterus ensipennis*), and then presents three hypotheses to explain the function of the widened shafts of the outermost primaries which form the "sabres." Although Hayes was unable to test these hypotheses, he does a good job of outlining a future research program to test sabre function. Finally, Robin Restall examines variation among Gray Seedeaters (*Sporophila intermedia*) and argues that *S. i. insularis* should be raised to a full species, Ring-necked Seedeater (*S. insularis*).

Part III contains mostly avifaunal studies from particular locales. These studies most often present species inventories, but some also use point counts or mist-netting to determine relative abundance of birds in describing avian communities. In addition to notes of pelagic seabirds wintering at sea, other papers examine bird abundance at Laventille Marsh prior to its apparent 'destruction'; restored marsh sites at Caroni, Trinidad; Guayaguayare and the Victoria Mayaro Forest reserve of Trinidad; and the Bocas Islands of the northern Gulf of Paria between Trinidad and Venezuela. While of relevance to the conservation and management of these sites, these papers are of perhaps less interest to a wider, general audience. Of more interest, I think, is the unique approach taken by Doug McNair and coauthors in one of the few papers in the book not specific to Trinidad and Tobago. They combined data from Guana Island in the British Virgin Islands with similar data from Harrison Point at the northwest tip of Barbados to examine patterns of Nearctic-Neotropic landbird migration in the eastern Caribbean. Blackpoll Warblers (*Dendroica striata*) were the most common migrant at each site, but a perhaps surprising variety of scarce transients or vagrants were also recorded. Results are used to assess

what routes birds likely take during autumn migration.

The largest group of papers, Part IV, includes eight papers on ecology, behavior and conservation. These include studies of the foraging behavior of the Trinidad Piping-Guan (*Pipile pipile*), a very interesting report of the persistence of some White-bearded Manakin (*Manacus manacus*) leks for as long as 42 years, the biology of the Band-rumped Swift (*Chaetura spinicauda*) and the Black-throated Mango (*Anthracothorax nigricollis*), and Stan Temple's use of French's compilation of life history data and a unique multiple logistic regression model to predict the relative vulnerability of birds on Trinidad and Tobago to extinction. An interesting paper by Tim Manolis and Alex Cruz presents preliminary data on the brood parasitic Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*) mating systems, suggesting that cowbirds may be promiscuous where host densities are clumped, but monogamous where hosts are more uniformly distributed. Finally, in my favorite article in this section, Mykela Heath and Mike Hansell examine weaving techniques used by Yellow Oriole (*Icterus nigrogularis*) and Crested Oropendola (*Psaracolius decumanus*) in nest building. The authors present a fascinating discussion of the types of weaving stitches, trajectories of strands of building materials, and stitching and building techniques, and compare these results to those of other nest weavers.

Finally, the tribute concludes with several short communications. While these are mostly sight records, their inclusion here is appropriate, as much of Richard French's contribution to ornithology and conservation in Trinidad and Tobago was based on just this sort of careful observation and record keeping.

The editors and the University of the West Indies are to be saluted for their contribution of this fine and handsomely produced monograph, and I expect Richard French is pleased with this deserved tribute as well. The diversity of papers presented in the book provides an example of how much innovative and important ornithological work is undertaken in Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean in general. Now, if only the editors had thought to resolve that enduring question: what is the origin of that odd name, French?—STEVEN C. LATTA, *PRBO Conservation Science*, 7428 Redwood Blvd. Ste. 203, Novato, CA 94945, USA; e-mail: slatta@prbo.org

LITERATURE CITED

- WORTH, C. B. 1967. A naturalist in Trinidad. Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott Co. 291 pp.
- BOND, J. 1961. Birds of the West Indies. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 256 pp.
- FRENCH, R. 1973. A guide to the birds of Trinidad and Tobago. Wynnewood, PA: Livingston Publishing Company. 470 pp.

BIRDS OF THE WEST INDIES.—Herbert Raffaele, James Wiley, Orlando Garrido, Allan Keith, and Janis Raffaele. 2003. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey. 216 pp. ISBN: 0-691-11319-X. \$24.95.

This welcome guide to the birds of the West Indies is a field version of Raffaele *et al.*'s (1998) popular *A guide to the birds of the West Indies*. Itself the successor to James Bond's (1961) *Birds of the West Indies*, Raffaele *et al.*'s 1998 book is a comprehensive guide to 564 species, including wintering and passage migrants. All species were illustrated in Raffaele *et al.*'s 1998 book, and seven special plates featured the island endemics of Cuba, Hispaniola, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico. This earlier book also

contained fairly comprehensive information on field identification, voice, nesting, and geographic range of each species. While widely hailed for its thorough treatment, it was also bemoaned for its large format, heavy weight, prohibitive cost, and especially for its notoriously bad binding which repeatedly failed to withstand even the lightest field use.

Now, Princeton University Press has released this heavily revised and redesigned book based on Raffaele *et al.*'s earlier effort. Much shorter in length, pocket-sized, and with a weather-resistant cover and solid binding, the book can truly be considered a field guide. Introductory material has been limited to brief accounts on how to use the guide, an explanation of terms used in the text, and a summary of conservation issues in the West Indies. A list of