

BOOK REVIEWS

BIRDS OF ARUBA, CURAÇAO AND BONAIRE.
—Bart de Boer, Eric Newton, and Robin Restall.
2011. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
176 pp. ISBN: 978-0-691-15336-0.

This compact volume is the first comprehensive field guide to the avifauna of the islands of Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire—formerly known as part of the Netherlands Antilles. Located just 30–90 km off the coast of Venezuela, the three islands are semi-arid but they possess distinct dry and wet seasons. The local avifauna, consisting of some 286 species, is considered to contain elements of both South American and West Indian elements, including two species of conservation concern, the Yellow-shouldered Parrot (*Amazona barbadensis*) and the Caribbean Coot (*Fulica caribaea*).

This field guide begins with customary introductions to the history, natural history, and avifauna occurring on the islands, as well as conservation efforts in the region. While informative these accounts are remarkably condensed. More useful are several pages dedicated to maps of each island, including place names and birding sites. Though also quite abbreviated, for a visitor unfamiliar with the islands, these brief summaries will provide direction as to where one might begin and what one might expect to see at each island's premier birding sites.

The heart of this field guide is of course the fine plates and the accompanying species descriptions. The plates, most of which are derived from Restall *et al.*'s (2006) *Birds of Northern South America*, and Kenefick *et al.*'s (2011) *Birds of Trinidad and Tobago*, are well executed and accurate. Most of the almost 1,000 images are distributed across the 71 plates in such a way as to avoid over-crowding or confusion. Of particular note, and one of the real strengths of this guide and of the other volumes illustrated by Robin Restall, is the depiction of far more plumages than the standard adult male and female of a species. Frequently the subspecies is identified, including multiple subspecies when they co-occur, and both breeding and non-breeding plumages are depicted when appropriate. In addition, juveniles and adults, alternative color morphs, first-, second- and third-winter plumages in the case

of gulls, and even worn plumages may be shown. This to me offers a tremendous, and seldom seen, opportunity to expand one's ability to identify those birds that "just don't seem quite right," but more importantly it gives at least some birders the opportunity for a more rewarding experience by offering a glimpse into the diversity of subspecies and the challenge of identifying not just a species but its age and sex as well. My only criticism of the plates is that at times some of the colors, such as the reds and yellows, are just too vibrant; whether that reflects the original art or the printing process, I do not know, though I suspect the latter.

The species descriptions are all found opposite the color plates in this field guide. Short and succinct, they do well by presenting names (including local names), size, key descriptions, voice, habitat and habits, and status on the islands. The all important species descriptions are quite good, with key field marks noted in italicized and bold type. In some descriptions, similar species are mentioned along with key features to distinguish the look-alikes.

In short, I am pleased with this small but essential guide to the birds of Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire. I think that any visitor to these islands with an interest in birds would most certainly want to acquire a copy, and I doubt they would be disappointed. In addition, this book continues to make use of the illustration of the broad diversity of subspecies and plumages that co-occur in almost any locale, and sets a fine example of what the next generation of field guides may aspire to.—STEVEN C. LATTA, *Department of Conservation and Field Research, National Aviary, Allegheny Commons West, Pittsburgh, PA 15212, USA; e-mail: steven.latta@aviary.org.*

LITERATURE CITED

- KENEFICK, M., R. RESTALL, AND F. HAYES. 2011. *Birds of Trinidad and Tobago*, 2nd edn. Christopher Helm, London.
- RESTALL, R., C. RODNER, AND M. LENTINO. 2006. *Birds of northern South America: an identification guide*. Christopher Helm, London.