

BOOK REVIEWS

BIRDS OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS. Revised edition, by **Patricia Bradley.** Photographs by Yves-Jacques Rey-Millet and the author. Caerulea Press, Italy. 1995. 211 pp. 12 x 19 cm. 75 color plates (some with insets), line drawings, maps. Index (including English and Latin names). ISBN 976-8052-10-4. Hardbound. US\$30.00 to SCO members.

When Patricia Bradley's splendid guide first appeared 10 years ago, it set a high standard for the treatment of island avifauna. Indeed, this beautifully illustrated (with color photographs) guide to the birds and their habitats in the Cayman Islands established a benchmark by which other guides to West Indian birds have been measured. Soon after completing her guide, Ms. Bradley left the Cayman Islands to work on conservation projects in the Turks and Caicos and to live for a short time in her native United Kingdom. Nevertheless, she made several return visits to the Caymans, and continued to interact with visiting and resident birders. Through her observations and interactions with others (particularly the Cayman Islands Bird Club), Ms. Bradley accumulated considerable new information on the islands' birds. Now, a short 10 years after the publication of her book, the author is back with a thoroughly revised version of her guide. If ever there was a case of gilding the lily, this is it!

That this is a revised version is evident as soon as one picks up the book, as it sports new photographs (Cuban Parrot, West Indian Whistling-Ducks) on the front and back covers. Inside, Ms. Bradley provides new or expanded treatments of her introductory sections, including completely re-worked presentations on Cayman Island ecosystems, the derivation of the avifauna, and geology, and a more extensive introduction to the islands' avifauna. A checklist of endemic subspecies has been improved from the earlier edition, making it easier to use. New sections have been added on "Threats to habitats" and "Threats to species." In her section on "Conservation efforts," Ms. Bradley discusses progress and problems in bird conservation in the Islands. The section on "Ecosystems and habitat zones" has been extensively revised, adding new material. The scale used for describing bird status has been refined. Finally, the glossary and illustrations of bird topography have been enhanced.

As before, the main body of the book is devoted to species accounts, which have been up-dated and otherwise revised to include more recent information, and to reflect recent nomenclature and population changes. Thirty-one species, many of which were listed as incidentals in the first edition, now receive full species accounts (2 species formerly given full accounts are now relegated to the vagrant list). Ms. Bradley has improved the presentation of information for all species in these accounts and has added substantial new information to the various topics. The species accounts are supplemented by a fine checklist of breeding birds, with information on their status and distribution among the three

islands. Additional annotated lists of vagrant, rare, and introduced species appear in the appendices. Ms. Bradley has improved on her earlier presentation of suggested birding sites and access, with new maps and additional recommended locations (Appendix 3). Finally, an updated and expanded bibliography is included.

The photographs have also received some revision, with clearer shots of several species (e.g., Thick-billed, Black-whiskered, and Yucatán vireos) and the addition of photographs for other species or races (e.g., Cayman Brac Parrot is included as a comparison with the Grand Cayman race). Three new habitat photographs are included and repositioned in the introductory section. Unfortunately, the color reproduction is somewhat inferior to that of the first edition because much of the brilliance of Yves-Jacques Rey-Millet's fine photographs is lost.

This is a high-quality publication, with excellent information on resident and visiting birds gathered through extensive observations in the field, and illustrated with good graphical material. As in her earlier edition, the author targets both resident and tourist, expert and amateur, making this an easily read introduction to the islands' ecosystems and avifaunas. Beyond that, the book contains a wealth of information on the biology of the birds of the Cayman Islands. It is recommended as essential to the visitor to the Cayman Islands and to the student of West Indian birds. Ms. Bradley has generously provided for the Land Fund of the National Trust for the Cayman Islands to receive some of the proceeds from the sale of the book. JWW.

A NATURAL HISTORY ATLAS TO THE CAYS OF THE U. S. VIRGIN ISLANDS, by **Arthur E. Dammann and David W. Nellis.** Pineapple Press, Inc., Florida, U.S.A. 160 pp. 22 x 28 cm. Color photographs, maps. Index. ISBN 1-56164-022-0. Softcover. US\$24.95.

From the moment you open to the title page and view the splendid color photograph of a Great Blue Heron in the frontispiece, you suspect you are in for a treat. The contents of this volume do not disappoint. The text, written by long-time Virgin Islands residents Dammann and Nellis, is informative and the photographs (by Nellis) are excellent.

In their introduction Dammann and Nellis orient us to the location and characteristics of the 56 cays and adjacent rocks covered in the book. They present a discussion of the importance of shoreline relative to island surface area, followed by a general description of the cays' climate, soils, salt ponds, plants, historic changes, and human influences. Information on past and present breeding sites of 17 seabirds among 22 cays and the main islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John, as well as Tobago (British Virgin Islands), is nicely consolidated into a table.

The main body of the book consists of information for each of the 56 cays, as well as manglars, man-made or -destroyed islands, and unvegetated rocks. Two full pages of this oversized book are dedicated to each cay. One is immediately impressed by the excellent color photographs, which cover one of these two pages and a part of the second. The photographs consist of an aerial shot for each cay and, usually, a ground-level view of the site or its characteristic habitat. Other photographs of flora and fauna (many birds) accompany the account for each cay, with many of these photos having a sidebar of information about the species or group depicted.

The text describing each cay occupies about half a page, and is packed with vital information on the cay's position, owner, size, elevation, and shoreline. Geological, near-shore, and man-made features are described, as are floral and fauna characteristics. Among the latter are descriptions of the nesting populations of birds, some with historical and present compositions, and breeding numbers. Based on their extensive experience in the Virgin Islands, the authors present a set of recommendations for each of the cays.

Anyone who has had to sort out the myriad of older names for these cays will appreciate the glossary of place names, wherein synonyms are cross-indexed and sources of information are included. The authors include a short bibliography and an index to species names (English and scientific), which includes reference to the photographs. Finally, a general index includes subjects and sites.

The book is fittingly dedicated to George Seaman, the pioneer conservationist in the Virgin Islands. It is highly recommended as a visual rendering of the islands, as well as an excellent description of the past and present characteristics of the cays of the U. S. Virgin Islands. JWW.

BLUE MOUNTAIN GUIDE. Margaret Hodges (Editor). Natural History Society of Jamaica, Kingston, Jamaica. Pear Tree Press/Hyde, Held & Blackburn Ltd. 56 pp. ISBN 976-8092-74-2. J\$100.00 (~US\$3.00).

This guide, which had been a vision for many years, has finally become a reality. This was possible with the assistance of many experts in their respective fields. The authors cover various aspects of natural history, which are non-technical, semi-technical, and technical. The booklet takes a comprehensive look at the Blue Mountain range, Jamaica, with one chapter devoted to birds.

The first section presents various routes from which the Blue Mountain trails may be accessed as well as accommodations and tour options. It gives tips on appropriate hiking gear, as well as simple do's and don't's. The reader is taken on a tour of historical sites and other places of interest, winding from Cooperage up through Hardwar Gap, across to

Silver Hill Gap, down to Guava Ridge, and finally completing the circle back at Cooperage.

The second section of the guide describes the human and geological history of the range. This starts with a description of the French settlers in the mountains and traces the development of the region up until the deforestation and erosion that accompanied the introduction of coffee and other plants. Following this is a technical overview of the geology of the mountain range.

The final section gives details on the flora and fauna of the area, with one chapter dedicated solely to the avifauna of the Blue Mountain range. Beautiful photographs and line drawings of plants, including introduced species, epiphytes, and herbs, from the forest boundary to the Blue Mountain peak, are presented. The guide makes note of the 65 species of orchids and the unique elfin woodland found in the Blue Mountains. Readers are taken on a night trek to discover invertebrates such as "blinkies" and "peeny-wallies." Honeybees, butterflies, walking sticks, and spiders are examined during the day. The number of vertebrates found in the Blue Mountains is small. Frogs, bats, mongooses, birds, and three species of lizards occur there.

The guide ends with a chapter on the common birds that dwell in the Blue Mountains. These include the abundant Red-billed Streamertail, noisy Jamaican Woodpecker, and diminutive Jamaican Tody. Some of the uncommon birds and their peculiarities are also described. The "Wildpine Sergeant" foraging in bromeliads, the "Mountain Witch" with its haunting call, and the quiet "Ringtail" all contribute to the unique beauty of the Blue Mountains. In addition to descriptions, checklists of Jamaican birds and North American migrants found from mid- to high-levels are provided. For birders who desire a more comprehensive description of the birds of the Blue Mountains, a list of recommended guide books is included. **Chandra A. Degia**, Grambling Cooperative Wildlife Project, P. O. Box 4290, Grambling State University, Grambling, Louisiana 71245, USA.

THE BIRDS OF THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS: THE OFFICIAL CHECKLIST, by Patricia Bradley. National Trust of the Turks and Caicos Islands, Grand Turk, Turks and Caicos Islands. 24 pp. Map.

The attractively illustrated cover of the checklist provides the bird-watcher with a sneak preview of the birds to be seen in the Turks and Caicos Islands. For those who are unfamiliar with the geography of these islands, a map is provided on the first page. There is also a Table of Contents for quick access to the families in the actual checklist, as well as an overview that presents a general description of the location, island constituents, protected areas, vegetation, and avian composition of the Turks and Caicos Islands. A key to

relative abundance, status, and bird occurrence on each island group is provided for use with the checklist. The checklist itself is divided into Waterbirds, from the grebes (Podicipedidae) to the gulls and terns (Laridae), and Landbirds, from the pigeons and doves (Columbidae) to the finches and sparrows (Emberizidae). Space is provided for recording new sightings and notes. In addition, a list of recommended books is given. Bird-watchers are reminded that permits are required to visit sanctuaries, and that birds in the Turks and Caicos Islands are protected. **Chandra A. Degia**, Grambling Cooperative Wildlife Project, P. O. Box 4290, Grambling State University, Grambling, Louisiana 71245, U. S. A.

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS OF CUBA AND ADJACENT ISLANDS

As announced at the Society's 1993 annual meeting in Playa Girón, Cuba, the Breeding Bird Atlas of Cuba Project proposes to provide data on the status and distribution of the approximately 160 species that nest on the main island of Cuba, Isla de la Juventud (formerly Isla de Pinos), and adjacent keys. Preliminary results of the Project were presented at the XXI International Ornithological Congress held in Vienna, Austria last year. The Project is coordinated at the Zoology Department of the Universidad de Salamanca, Spain, with participating ornithologists from several Cuban agencies and institutions. Cuban ornithologists are in charge of finding and evaluating information from their colleagues. To date, funding for the Project has come mainly from the participating institutions, but a grant has been requested from the Instituto de Cooperación Iberoamericano of Spain.

The Project organizers invite individuals and organizations interested in ornithology, biodiversity, and conservation to collaborate with them, or to send any suggestions they may have. They also request that interested ornithologists or birdwatchers who have visited Cuba during the breeding season send data for inclusion in the database. Each contribution will be acknowledged in the Atlas, and the organizers hope to offer copies of the book to collaborators at a reduced rate. The organizers request that curators of ornithological collections send a list of Cuban bird skins (with dates and localities) in their collections. All information and inquiries should be sent to:

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL COUNCIL

The Ornithological Council is the public voice for ornithologists in the United States. It was founded in 1992 by seven scientific societies, including the American Ornithologists' Union, Association of Field Ornithologists, Colonial Waterbird Society, Cooper Ornithological Society, Pacific Seabird Group, Raptor Research Foundation, and Wilson Ornithological Society. These societies represent more than 5000 scientists and students of bird life with worldwide membership and expertise. The objectives of the Council and its members include to (1) Link the scientific community with public and private decision-makers; (2) Provide timely information about birds to help ensure scientifically-based decisions, policies, and management actions; (3) Inform ornithologists of proposals and actions that affect birds or the study of birds; and (4) Speak for scientific ornithology on public issues. Among the services provided by the Council are (1) Development of a database of expertise, (2) Analyses of funding trends in ornithological programs, and (3) Information exchange to improve the quality of decisions. A brochure describing The Ornithological Council and its activities is available from:

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STATUS OF PUERTO RICAN RAPTORS

The Puerto Rican Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus brunnescens*) and Puerto Rican Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus venator*) were listed as Endangered by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service on 9 September 1994.

BUYER BEWARE BROCHURE AVAILABLE

The World Wildlife Fund, together with several Caribbean governments and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), has put together a brochure to educate tourists and protect endangered wildlife. "Buyer Beware" summarizes which wildlife and wildlife products should generally be avoided when looking for souvenirs. For a copy, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to World Wildlife Fund, 1250 24th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, U.S.A., Attn.: "Buyer Beware" Brochure for the Caribbean.