

BOOK REVIEW

AVES COMUNES DE LA REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA (COMMON BIRDS OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC).— Steven C. Latta. 2002. Published by Editora Corripio, Santo Domingo, R.D. 60 pp., introduction, index.

An awareness of the nature is the first step towards learning about nature, which may in turn, lead to its appreciation. This appreciation of nature, is fundamental to its conservation. Well-illustrated and appropriately written books are key elements in developing a region's or territory's conservation ethic. The need for a conservation ethic supported by the public is especially important on the island of Hispaniola, home to 27 endemic bird species, some of which are threatened by human-mediated extinction. Within the Dominican Republic the original field guide by Annabelle Stockton de Dod (1981 *Guía de Campo para las Aves de la República Dominicana*) and her more comprehensive book (1987 *Aves de la República Dominicana*) provided the country with its only texts in Spanish devoted exclusively to the country's birdlife. Unfortunately, both are out of print, and illustrations were limited to ink line drawings, although the later text did have color plates of many, but not all of the country's species. Thus the new guide to common birds by Steve Latta fills a void in the country's bird literature, by providing the general public with the first photographic guide to some of the common birds in

the Dominican Republic.

Latta's guide provides a color photo and brief summary of 60 of the most common bird species of the Dominican Republic or those well known from the country's folklore. Suggestions for inclusion of species were provided by both the local ornithological society and avian conservation group and thus are representative of those species that local authorities believe should be familiar to Dominicans and visitors. The book's photos, provided by four different Dominican photographers, are of sufficient quality to enable field identification of all included species. Along with each photo is the common name in Spanish and English, its scientific name, length, and status (i.e., resident, endemic, migrant, introduced, threatened). A brief text in Spanish and English provides a description of the species, some general natural history notes, and in the case of threatened species, the reason(s) for its threatened status.

The overall high quality of Latta's book and especially its attractive photos should make the book popular with Dominicans and tourists alike. This work represents a valuable contribution towards developing the public's appreciation of Dominican birds. Hopefully, it can receive wide circulation within the Dominican Republic, and it should be required reading by all school children in the country.—JOSEPH M. WUNDERLE, JR., *International Institute of Tropical Forestry, USDA Forest Service, P. O. Box 490, Palmer, Puerto Rico 00721.*

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