

on the introductory map, the others are not, although their geographic coordinates are listed in the checklists. For those not intimately familiar with South Pacific geography, a location map for these island territories would be helpful.

The first appendix covers “hints for birdwatchers” on equipment, legal issues, safety, birdcraft and bushcraft, and some excellent tips on “birdwatching in various habitats.” These are followed by a short glossary,

a list of birdwatching and naturalist organisations and a “core library” list. Finally, there are separate indices for Latin and common names, and a “quick index to field information.”

All-in-all this is an excellent guide and I look forward to giving mine a good field test in the near future.

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The Birds of Barbados

By P. A. Buckley, Edward B. Massiah, Maurice B. Hutt, Francine G. Buckley and Hazel F. Hutt. 2009. British Ornithologists' Union, P.O. Box 417, Peterborough, PE7 3FX UK. 295 pages. 40 GBP.

Barbados has long been a popular destination for Canadian sun seekers. But beautiful beaches and coral reefs aside, what does it have to offer the visiting birder? Being a small island it has limited species diversity — thirty species makes a good birding day — and only one endemic bird species, and that perhaps one of the duller birds on the planet (the recently split Barbados Bullfinch). The answer lies in the wind, more precisely, the trade winds. The same winds that first blew European explorers to the Caribbean routinely transport Afro- Eurasian vagrants to Barbados. This factor, coupled with its proximity to South America, makes it the “Scilly Islands” of the Americas, with a jaw-dropping list of vagrants and “firsts” for the Americas.

This rich record is amply documented in the latest instalment of the British Ornithological Union *Birds of...* series. In keeping with the rest of the series, it is a scholarly, extensively researched work; more than an annotated list, it is a comprehensive study of the island's avifauna, both resident and visiting. There is an extensive introductory section which describes the island's ecology and its history, including the accounts of early naturalists. There is an exhaustive discussion of the ecology of the island and its avifauna, touching on various species groupings (seabirds, shorebirds, land birds, etc.) and concepts (endemism, the role of migration and vagrancy, etc.) There are also 24 appendices touching on an extensive array of topics, everything from Christmas Bird Counts and ringing [banding] returns to the likely proximate geographical origins of the island's avifauna and Barbados bird holdings in major museum collections. There are particularly intriguing sections on “enigmatic historical taxa” and “historical apocrypha” which, in addition to expanding one's vocabulary, provide a fascinating glimpse into the past.

Like all works on regional avifauna the heart of the book is the systematic list, and this is where it shines. Each species receives a comprehensive treatment including a description of its range in the world and in the West Indies and, of course, its occurrence in Barbados. The latter includes the first known mention of the species, followed by an extensive discussion of

its historical and present status. This account includes seasonal information such as the earliest arrival or latest departure dates for migratory species, along with a discussion on its breeding status on the island. For species which occur only rarely, details are provided for each sighting. Included in each account is the often evocative local name for the bird, if one exists. Most of the species accounts conclude with a comments section which may touch on a variety of subjects such as the taxonomic status of the bird or interesting ringing returns. The text is complemented by many tables, maps and colour plates, the latter including aerial photographs of various aspects of the island, photographs of some typical Bajan birds and a pot pourri of exciting vagrant species. The book ends with an extensive (20 page) list of references and a detailed index. It is worth highlighting that this is not a “where to go birding” book, nor is it a guide to identification, for that one must look elsewhere.

Despite being relatively slight, there is so much packed into this book that it is hard to navigate. This is not aided by a confusing format. For example, the annotated list starts only on page 76, and then only after a long annotated list of “unsupported” species. It should also be noted that the authors have taken a liberal approach to taxonomic questions, thus, “Golden Warbler” is treated as a full species, distinct from “American Yellow Warbler”. While some may see this as jumping the taxonomic gun, it is useful for a regional work to delineate the occurrence of recognizable forms, recognizing that the consensus on species limits will ebb and flow over time.

The *Birds of Barbados* sets a new bar for Caribbean ornithology, and will be equally at home in a university ecology course or a birder's library. It is a fitting tribute to Maurice and Hazel Hutt, who passed away prior to its completion, and follows in the tradition of the venerable James Bond, author of the classic work on Caribbean birds. I would highly recommend this book to anyone with an interest in Caribbean ornithology and ecology.

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