

The book will be instantly familiar to anyone who has seen any of Princeton's earlier Caribbean guides, such as *A guide to the birds of the West Indies* by Raffaele et al. Indeed, some of the plates have been taken from that earlier guide. The book follows a standard format, with front pieces speaking to the topography and habitats of the island (from the highest mountains in the Caribbean, at 3098 m, to the lowest lake, at 44 m below sea level), endemic species (31) and subspecies (50), avian conservation, and the island's ornithological history. This is followed by detailed species accounts with information on similar species, vocalizations, habitat preferences, status, nesting, and global range, as well as a "comments" section containing interesting anecdotes such as the place of the bird in local culture. Each species account is accompanied by an up-to-date, detailed map of the bird's distribution on the island. This information is complemented by 56 colour plates, most of which group up to 10 similar species however, pride of place is given to the island's endemic species and one endemic family (Palmchat), which merit larger portraits. The book closes with descriptions of 14 birding sites and a checklist.

The species accounts are accurate and provide sufficient information to identify most species. Particular attention is paid to the resident species most likely to be of interest to visitors, thus ensuring that one is indeed able to safely differentiate Long-billed and Narrow-billed Todys, the vireos, and other potentially confusing groups. Canadian readers will find the discussion of Bicknell's Thrush of interest as Hispaniola is the chief wintering ground of this enigmatic breeding species. In general, the treatment of migrants is better than in many other regional guides; while you might want to lug around a good North American guide for some of the shorebirds and basic plumaged warblers, the level of detail in the plates is impressive and will usually suffice (e.g. if you look closely you can see the differently marked tertials in the illustrations of Long-billed and Short-billed dowitchers). In general the plates have the rather washed out and sombre tones of the earlier Princeton guides, and in some of the portraits the feathers have a rather messy look, not unlike old museum specimens, but this is a stylistic quibble; on the whole the plates are very good. While the deci-

sion to illustrate all 306 species which have been recorded on the island has considerable merit, having three illustrations of a bird which has only occurred once (Swainson's Hawk) would seem an inappropriate use of always scarce space.

The authors largely follow standard taxonomy, but have jumped the gun on American Ornithologists' Union orthodoxy by accepting recently proposed revisions, such as treating the Hispaniolan Nightjar as distinct from the Cuban Nightjar, both traditionally combined as one species known as Greater Antillean Nightjar (confusingly, the latter name is used in the similar species account under Least Pauraque, one of relatively few editorial errors in the book). Similarly, the authors have abolished the names of two endemics, Green-tailed Ground-Warbler and White-winged Warbler which have now morphed into Green-tailed Ground-Tanager and Hispaniolan Highland-Tanager, respectively. Some other incipient splits and lumps are suggested in the text, reflecting the fact that yet more work needs to be done on the island. Likewise, the species accounts indicate that several species have been added to the island's avifauna in the last decade, suggesting a recent increase in coverage and the possibility that the island's bird list will grow: the local occurrence of several pelagic species in particular seems to be poorly known.

Who should buy this book? Someone with a general interest in Caribbean birds may be better served by *A guide to the Birds of the West Indies* by Raffaele et al., which covers Hispaniola along with the rest of the islands. But anyone planning to travel to this beautiful island, or with a keen interest in Caribbean ornithology, would be well advised to acquire a copy; the range maps and site guides alone are worth the price if you are planning a self-guided visit (but better still, go with one of the organizations cited in the book). Finally, and most importantly, there should be a copy in every school and public library on the island: one hopes that Spanish and French versions are in the works.

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## Atlas of Bird Migration – Tracing the Great Journeys of the World's Birds

Edited by J. Elphick. 2007. Firefly Books Ltd., 66 Leek Crescent, Richmond Hill, Ontario L4B 1H1 Canada. 176 pages. \$35.

Firefly Books has come out with another decent book. They've claimed the target audience to be, "bird enthusiasts, naturalists and the inquiring reader" and those who "wish to comprehend the perilous voyages that constitute one of the great wonders of the natural world." The book is written to be consumable by peo-

ple in grade school and perhaps almost fully understood by those as young as 12 or 14 years of age; it will be an enjoyable, and not too taxing to read for adults who have a passing interest in the topic. Serious birders will want to go elsewhere for more in-depth descriptions of the topics.

The book starts out with 15 two-to-four page chapters on the biology and environmental conditions of migration, including timing, flight styles, genetics and weather. For the most part, these are well-illustrated



synopses of the topics. The subsequent chapters are organized into sections covering major geographic areas (e.g., Eurasia, southern hemisphere, oceans), with two to eighteen chapters per section. Each chapter covers an order or family of birds, using one to four species as examples. There is a map as well as a calendar showing migration and breeding times for most of the illustrated birds.

Although the book is worldwide in scope, it is dominated by a British point of view; after the typical migration pattern of a species is noted, the accidental occurrences in Britain (but nowhere else) are described (if such has occurred). The global perspective is worthwhile, though only a small fraction of the planet's migratory birds can be described.

There are a few mistakes scattered throughout the book; these include classifying the Great Horned Owl

as an irruptive species, labelling Lake Winnipeg and its neighbours as the Great Lakes and describing the furcula as a pit (it is the wishbone). Many folks will gloss over these, but the more demanding reader will catch them; mistakes are never desirable, but most of these are relatively minor.

In addition to covering distance migrants, the book pays some attention to altitudinal migrants. When appropriate, the authors have included conservation messages on topics such as introduced species, habitat loss and the implications of commercial fisheries on birds.

Overall, this wouldn't be a book I'd give one of my serious birder friends as a gift, but it would do nicely for the beginner who is just migrating into the hobby.

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## **Handbook of the Birds of the World Volume II – Old World Flycatchers to Old World Warblers**

By Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott and David A. Christie (Editors). 2006. Lynx Edicions, Montseny, 8, 08193 Bellaterra, Barcelona, Spain. 800 pages. 199 Euros Cloth.

*Handbook of the Birds of the World. Volume II* covers eight families containing 733 species each with its own account and distribution map. The first of these is the Old World Flycatchers which, with the prejudices of youth, conjure up visions of Little Brown Jobs (LBJs). LBJs are the birders bane; small obscure birds that are difficult to see and identify. My first encounter with an Old World Flycatcher was the Spotted Flycatcher. This is an LBJ where "spotted" is an overstatement. They are only faint marks on the breast. This is a sweeping and somewhat unfair assessment as more than 40 percent of Old World Flycatchers are colourful. Indeed, the 22 members of *Cyrrus* are as colourful as North American Bluebirds.

In the next family, the Batises are small and largely black-and-white, whereas Wattle-eyes are somewhat more colourful with some orange and yellow. Many of the Monarch-flycatchers are a smart blue, but others are black and brown or black-and-white. However, the members of the small family of Paradise Flycatchers are among the most spectacular of the world's birds. One of my life's highlights was seeing the display of the black-and-white morph of the Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher. Similar and equally impressive species live in Africa and India. Kinglets and Firecrests is a family that is split between the old and new worlds. They are woodland sprites that can be surprisingly "cute" despite an initial dull impression. Gnatcatchers is a family of small, grey, long-tailed birds and is the only one in this volume that is confined to the new world. To my mind their counterparts are the Prinias of Africa and Asia.

Cisticolas and allies are a bit of a nightmare. Most of them are true LBJs being streaky or dull brown. Knowing their songs and distribution helps. Even the

easier to recognise birds like the Common Jery of Madagascar and the long-billed Tailor Bird of Asia can be a problem. They are so active that critical characteristics can be hard to see. Whenever you think you have seen all the relevant characteristics, after the bird has flown, you often discover there was something critical you missed!

The 270 species of Old World Warblers in the Sylviidae (with 14 species confined to the antique island of Madagascar) are mostly LBJs. They are some of the most difficult birds to identify in the field. This nightmare is composed of several genera with hyphenated names like bush-warbler, reed-warbler, leaf-warbler and swamp-warbler. While there are discernable differences between, say, leaf- and swamp-warblers within each group there are many look-alike species which vary only by minuscule differences in eye-stripe or bill length. I spent every lunch hour for two weeks beside a Willow Warbler's nest so that I could identify this species with confidence. This meant I could better see the subtle difference between Willow Warblers and Chiffchafs [greener versus browner, etc.]. Unfortunately these birds are variable. The reader need only compare the photo of a pale, greyish Willow Warbler on page 551 with the brownish-yellow one on page 514 to understand this difficulty. It gets even worse with birds like the newly split Booted Warbler [*Hippolais caligata*] and Syke's Warbler [*H. rama*] Syke's Warbler winters all over India whereas *H. caligata* is found only on the eastern coast between the Ganges and Pondicherry. So the two species overlap in the east and are almost identical. As they do not sing in winter it will take a DNA test to separate them!

So how did *Handbook of the Birds of the World. Volume II* fare in dealing with birds that are not as magnificent as albatross or wildly coloured like parrots? It actually does remarkably well. Once again we have a well-organized and researched volume that adds to the





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