

Birds of Belize

By H. Lee Jones. 2004. University of Texas Press, P.O. Box 7819, Austin, Texas 78713-7819 USA. x + 444 pages. U.S.\$60.00 Cloth, U.S.\$34.95 paperback.

This first edition covers the 574 species of birds recorded in the old British colony of Honduras, and now called Belize. Virtually all the birds are shown in colour plates, with accompanying text and 234 range maps. The book has a brief introduction to the biogeography and climate of Belize and a how-to-use chapter. This latter is very important because it explains how the author has chosen to organize the book and select the "common" names, as well as the names in Maya, Spanish and the aboriginal language. The range maps, at the back of the book, mostly cover the resident species and are large enough to be a useful guide.

The text is precise and clear and contains much useful information. For example, the call of the Northern Potoo is described in terms that should enable anyone to recognize it. This is the key characteristic in separating the Common from the Northern Potoo. Another good example is the description of the Double-toothed kites, explaining the "Distinctive puffy white undertail coverts that spread to the sides of the rump" This is a very good field character and this description captures it well.

The artwork is by Dana Gardiner, the same artist that illustrated the *Birds of Costa Rica* by Stiles and Skutch. I found his style a little stiff, giving the birds a flat appearance and missing something of their jizz. These new renderings, while similar to those in *Birds of Costa Rica*, are an improvement. The Wedge-billed Woodcreeper illustration more clearly depicts its remarkable tail. The Emerald Toucanet is the correct subspecies, *Aulacorhynchus prasinus prasinus*, showing a white throat. However, I did have difficulties

with some plates, but I think this relates more to the printing than the artwork. For example, the depiction of Cedar Waxwing is far too intense and the elaeenias are much too dark. The depiction of the Violet Sabrewing is deep blue. I have never seen one in the field that did not look violet (as described accurately in the text and depicted accurately in *Birds of Costa Rica*) under any light conditions. In particular I checked the depictions of Scaly-breasted Hummingbird (poorly done in *Birds of Costa Rica*) and it is better, but I still think a novice would have trouble in the field using the plate for identification purposes.

The nomenclature is fairly standard. The author retains Rock Dove for *Columba livia* (instead of the new "Rock Pigeon" – thereby reducing confusion with the orange-brown Rock Pigeon of South Africa, *Columba guinea*). I had to use the scientific name of *Phaethornis longirostris* to be sure the author's Long-billed Hermit was the same as Stiles and Skutch's (Western) Long-tailed Hermit. I am still confused as to the status and distribution of Passerini's and Cherrie's Tanager (a recent split of Scarlet-rumped Tanager). Only Passerini's Tanager is listed for Belize, which I believe is correct.

This guide is just under 6" × 9" × 1.25" (15 × 22 × 3 cm) and is too large for the average pocket. Although I have some reservations, I still think this book will make a useful field guide, especially if you use the text in conjunction with the plates. This book represents a good stride forward in literature for this section of the Americas. If it is to be used in the field I would be tempted to take along a Mexican guide as a second reference.

ROY JOHN

2193 Emard Crescent, Beacon Hill North, Ottawa, Ontario, K1J 6K5 Canada

Herpetology: Third Edition

By F. Harvey Pough, Robin M. Andrews, John E. Cadle, Martha L. Crump, Alan H. Savitsky and Kentwood D. Wells. 2004. Pearson Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, USA. ix + 726 pages. U.S.\$93.

In the preface to this edition of *Herpetology*, the authors state, "understanding amphibians and reptiles as organisms requires a perspective that integrates their morphology, physiology, behavior, and ecology and places that information in a phylogenetic context." The authors have done a commendable job at fulfilling this daunting task.

The text book is divided into four parts and each part is subdivided into chapters. Part one (What are amphibians and reptiles?) explores the field of herpetology, the place of amphibians and reptiles in vertebrate evolution, systematics and diversity of amphibians and reptiles, and biogeography. Part two (How do

they work?) has chapters on temperature, energetics, reproduction, locomotion and feeding. Part three (What do they do?) covers movements, communication, mating systems, diets and species assemblages. The fourth part (What are their prospects for survival?) discusses conservation of amphibians and reptiles in a single chapter.

How does this edition differ from previous editions? The second edition was published in 2001 and hence this edition includes many references to recent publications. There is also a greater emphasis on phylogenetic analyses, particularly in the early chapters on systematics. This edition also features colour photographs and colour distribution maps for the families of amphibians and reptiles. The colour maps do not really add much, but the colour photographs are effective. A chapter on biogeography is one of the biggest