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Birds of the Cayman Islands

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REVIEWS

Birds of the Cayman Islands.—Patricia Bradley. 1985. Publ. by author, Georgetown, Grand Cayman. 245 pp., 72 color plates (by Yves-Jacques Rey-Millet), 7 maps. £22 (\$32.50) plus £1.50 postage and packing. (Available from Law Reports International, Trinity College, Oxford OX1 3BH, England. Also available from The Crow's Nest Book Store, Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y. 14850, for \$25.95 plus \$2.75 for mailing).—This book is the first field guide to the 177 species of birds recorded from the diminutive Caribbean islands of Grand Cayman, Little Cayman, and Cayman Brac (total land area 263 km²). Ms. Bradley, a resident of Grand Cayman and active birder, is well familiar with the islands and their avifauna. The scope of her book includes the breeding birds, extinct forms, winter residents, transients, and all rare, casual, and accidental species for which there are reliable records.

The book is a pocket-sized guide, with a glossy hard cover and a sturdy binding. The Duke of Edinburgh, has provided a Foreword, and Dr. Oscar T. Owre, the Preface. The author's 19 page Introduction contains interesting and useful sections on physical characteristics of the Cayman Islands, derivation of the islands' avifauna, comments on breeding species, a checklist of the 16 endemic subspecies and the islands where they breed, and a discussion of non-breeding birds. In her section on Ecosystems and Habitat Zones, Ms. Bradley describes the dominant vegetation in the four ecological zones of the islands, gives a list of birds likely to be found in each zone, and includes birding sites for each zone on the three islands. The Introduction has a short section on conservation, in which Ms. Bradley describes the threats (particularly land development) to bird habitat in the Caymans and current efforts to set land aside as Bird Sanctuaries and to stop hunting of such species as the Cuban Parrot (*Amazona leucocephala*) and the locally rare Caribbean Dove (*Leptotila jamaicensis*). The introductory material concludes with a useful section on "Bird Identification and use of Text" and a glossary of terms used in the book.

The main body of the text consists of detailed accounts for each of the islands' 149 breeding, extinct, and migrant species, which are presented in taxonomic order by family. Scientific and English common names follow the Sixth Edition of the A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds (1983), although there are inconsistencies in the use of common English names (e.g., Parula Warbler = Northern Parula, American Brown Pelican = Brown Pelican). The Northern Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*), not the [Southern] Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx ruficollis*), occurs in the Caymans. Ms. Bradley also includes local English names, which are of great value for the visiting birder. Body size for each species is given in centimeters and inches. Plumage characteristics are given for adults and immatures and, where appropriate, for each sex or color morph. Characteristics of particularly diagnostic importance are presented in italics for quick reference. The range of the species outside the Caymans and habitat in the Cayman Islands are presented next for each species. The section on habits contains valuable information on clutch sizes, breeding chronology, and general behavior compiled from the author's observations and other sources. Each account concludes with a description of the species' status, including breeding status, island where the species occurs, and its seasonal abundance.

The book contains 67 color photographs of Cayman Island birds, a color photo of each of the 4 habitat zones, and an aerial photograph of Little Cayman Island, all by Yves-Jacques Rey-Millet. Each of the 45 breeding species is depicted in a color photograph; 25

species are illustrated with one plate each, whereas 20 other species are depicted in two or three plates and inserts. Besides the 36 species shown in adult plumages, nine species are illustrated with adult and immature or juvenile plumages; four species are depicted in male and female plumages; one species is shown in breeding and non-breeding plumages, and both color morphs of the Red-footed Booby (*Sula sula*) are shown. Illustrations of North American species are not included. Each of the plates is well indexed to the text account of that species, and vice versa.

Although photographs are not the best diagnostic illustrations for a field guide, the quality and utility of the plates included in this book mostly range from good to exquisite (Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*, flight shots of Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*, and White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*). The exceptions are the few photographs (e.g., Black-whiskered Vireo *Vireo altiloquus*, Yucatan Vireo *V. magister*) taken from behind and under the bird, rendering them of little value in field identification.

Ms. Bradley has included two appendices. Appendix I contains an annotated list of the 28 species she considers rare transients, casual, or accidental in the islands. This appendix also includes a checklist of breeding birds referenced to island, recommended field guides for the West Indies and North America (particularly useful for those species not illustrated in this book), and a selected bibliography, containing 17 books and 35 papers, 22 of which are on Cayman subjects. Appendix II contains sections on Birding Trips and "Phototips," maps of each of three islands, with details of three recommended birding sites on Grand Cayman, and a map of the northern Caribbean Sea, showing the location of the Cayman Islands.

The Index contains boldface subjects, italicized scientific names, and standard and local English names of birds.

Ms. Bradley's fine book is essential for anyone making a birding trip to the Cayman Islands. It is also valuable as a compilation of records and aspects of the biology of birds from these islands and for the many new data on the ecology of Cayman birds from the author's field work.

In keeping with her interest in Cayman Island bird conservation, Ms. Bradley is donating a portion of the profits from the book to the World Wildlife Fund.—**James W. Wiley**, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Apartado 21, Palmer, Puerto Rico 00721.

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EDITORIAL

Acknowledgments.—This concludes my fifth and final volume as editor of the Florida Field Naturalist. Although through these five years I have conscientiously avoided editorializing on these pages, I am compelled to take a last advantage of the position to acknowledge those who have helped me in this most pleasurable of assignments.

During my tenure I could do no better than to attempt to maintain the standards set by my predecessors Henry Stevenson and Fred Lohrer, who have kept themselves available for learned counsel. Fred Lohrer served two years as Associate Editor for reviews and has continued to produce his annual review of Florida birds in the periodical literature, and to watch over my shoulder.