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Puerto Rico's Birds in Photographs, 2nd Edition, by Mark W. Oberle

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Puerto Rico's Birds in Photographs, 2nd edition.—Mark W. Oberle. 2000. Editorial Humanitas, Seattle, Washington, 98112-2936. 132 p. + CD-ROM. Softcover, ISBN 0-9650104-1-4. \$29.95.—Mark W. Oberle's new edition of *Puerto Rico's Birds in Photographs* is really two books in one, a traditional softcover version and a digital version on CD-ROM. The first is compact and can be browsed at leisure and carried into the field, while the second provides details and additional photographs that can be explored as desired. Together, these formats seek to illustrate with color photographs all birds known from Puerto Rico, and to provide a synoptic summary of information for each of them.

The stated audience for this publication is anyone who wishes to learn about Puerto Rico's avian "heritage." In short, it is intended to be a source of general information supported by a portfolio of mostly superb photographs. This book and CD-ROM fulfils this goal admirably. Both English- and Spanish-versions are available on the CD-ROM.

The book is an abbreviated "hard-copy" version of the CD-ROM. It meets the needs of those who are not computer-literate, or those who simply wish to carry it afield while leaving the laptop computer at home. Although it is not intended as a field guide, it can serve as a useful adjunct to available guides to West Indian or Puerto Rican birds. It presents a representative selection of photographs (one to three per species) of 181 species, including all breeding birds, common visitors (migrants), and a few other species that merit attention.

In contrast, the CD-ROM contains much additional information. Apart from an extensive bibliography (below), there are background essays on Puerto Rico's birds and conservation, a list of organizations that support conservation, including those that focus on Puerto Rican issues, and a sample birding tour in the southwest of the island. The main feature is a list of birds, with links to species accounts of over 340 species. Some species are not yet known from Puerto Rico, but occur on neighboring islands. The species accounts are accompanied by a marvelous selection of photographs contributed collectively by 50 photographers.

Endemic species are treated separately from non-endemics in the book. This is a problem only if one wishes to quickly compare similar species (e.g. mangos, flycatchers) between the two groups. The nomenclature follows the most recent edition of and supplement to the A.O.U. Check-list, so all names are current. Spanish names are provided as well. Each account summarizes information under the headings "Identification", "Habitat", "Habits", "Status and Conservation", "Range", and, when appropriate, "Taxonomy." The statement on Habits appropriately focuses on what is known about behavior and ecology of the species in Puerto Rico, and is well researched throughout. However, information on breeding behavior in some accounts of northern visitors is readily available elsewhere, and is superfluous here. In general, the text is carefully edited and succinctly written, and is very readable. Although few typographic errors are evident, occasional lapses appear in the accounts. One such instance is the unqualified remark in the American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) account that "kestrels in Europe" detect the urine and feces of rodents in ultraviolet light, but that such information is unavailable for "kestrels in Puerto Rico." Since the word "kestrel" is otherwise used throughout the account to refer to American (Puerto Rican) birds, unwary or uninformed readers may be forgiven if they assume that American Kestrels also occur in Europe, rather than another species entirely.

In nearly every case, the photographs selected to represent species in the book are good choices. However, the choice for the Lesser Antillean Pewee (*Contopus latirostris*) presents a puzzle. The adult plumage of this species is frequently portrayed or described in other books, but the immature plumages of this species are rarely mentioned, and evidently not well known. Oberle offers three photographs, a small one of an adult (distinctive buff-yellow underparts), and a large and small one (images of same bird) of an

apparent immature individual (incomplete grayish-olive "vest" on white underparts). Apart from a vague remark about "duller" immature birds, Oberle provides no special comment on the different plumages, yet the photographs seem to demand some explanation. The CD-ROM has an excellent portfolio of photographs of adults. Incidentally, the comment about the species' name ("*Contopus portoricensis*") if it were to be regarded as an endemic to Puerto Rico is gratuitous and incorrect, since *blancoi*, not *portoricensis*, is the oldest available specific epithet.

The texts of the species accounts in the book and in the CD-ROM differ in a couple significant ways, but otherwise conform closely. The CD-ROM account has a separate heading on "Voice", but this information is summarized under "Habits" in the book. The book provides no references in individual species accounts and only a short bibliography at the end of the book. The lack of citations in the book prevents internal referencing, but the CD-ROM provides a list of references in each account and a complete bibliography (nearly 700 titles) that is accessed by a hyperlink. This bibliography provides an extensive compilation of primary and secondary sources of information on West Indian birds.

Differences between species accounts in the two formats reflect their respective strengths or purposes, portability versus detail. For example, the Adelaide's Warbler (*Dendroica adelaidae*) account in the book offers three photographs (one of the St. Lucia Warbler [*D. delicata*], formerly also Adelaide's Warbler), a slightly abbreviated text (voice is given separate treatment in the CD-ROM), and no references. The CD-ROM provides the same three photographs plus 11 others of Adelaide's Warblers, and one other of St. Lucia Warbler for comparison. The images in this case are the work of four different photographers.

The goal of providing a summary of what is known about Puerto Rico's birds, accompanied by a selection of marvelous photographs, has been fully achieved. The book and CD-ROM complement one another well, although the CD-ROM repeats information already available in the book. Many owners probably will use the book as a convenient guide to Puerto Rico's birds. However, the book does poorly in distinguishing similar species in the descriptions, so users will not find that it substitutes as a field guide, as noted. Many accounts would benefit if the sex of birds in the photographs were identified. Still, the strengths of this publication far exceed any minor issues raised here. I can recommend it highly to anybody interested in West Indian birds in general, and in Puerto Rico's avifauna in particular. It provides a useful statement of current knowledge, and the book would be a valuable field companion.—**Jon S. Greenlaw**, Archbold Biological Station, Venus, Florida 33960.