

BOOK REVIEWS

Birds of Palau

FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF PALAU. John Engbring. Illustrated by Takesi Suzuki. Palau Conservation Office, Koror, Palau. 1988. 92 pp. 64 illustrations. US \$10. Paperback.

The avifauna of Palau is the most diverse in Micronesia, both in terms of resident birds and migrants. Such variety has arisen because of the archipelago's proximity to the land masses of New Guinea and the Philippines. People interested in the birdlife of this island group will be pleased to learn of this newly published field guide from the Palau Conservation Office. The original manuscript for this handsome booklet was written 10 years ago by John Engbring, who was then completing 2 years of Peace Corps duty as a wildlife biologist in Palau, but unfortunately, funding for publication did not become available until 1988.

The book's introductory sections briefly describe the physical features of Palau's islands, the general components of its avifauna, the various habitats used by birds, and the current status of bird conservation in the archipelago. A small note is also included with tips to visiting birdwatchers.

Sixty-three species accounts, each occupying a full page, comprise the main text. These accounts characterize all of Palau's 49 extant resident birds, plus 14 of the most common visitors. Each species has been colorfully illustrated by Palauan artist Takesi Suzuki. The paintings add greatly to the overall appearance of the book and are generally accurate with a few exceptions. Minor errors in coloration, posture, or body shape are present for several birds, such as the Palau bush-warbler, Palau fantail, and Palau morningbird, but are not serious enough to hinder identifications. Species accounts are arranged in taxonomic order and contain thorough descriptions of the appearance, distribution, voice, and habits of each bird. I especially appreciate the distribution and habits sections of each account, which give excellent background information on a species' range and abundance within the archipelago, as well as useful notes on social behavior, flight characteristics, diet, and nesting. An up-to-date checklist of Palau's birds is placed near the end of the book and includes a listing of local bird names, something that will allow off-island birdwatchers to communicate better with Palauan residents and friends. The guide concludes with a list of pertinent references and an index.

Users may prefer this booklet over *A Field Guide to*

the Birds of Hawaii and the Tropical Pacific by H. D. Pratt, P. L. Bruner & D. G. Berrett when deciding which bird manual to carry with them in the field. Engbring's guide is smaller (about ¼ inch thick), contains slightly more detailed information on each species, and is more convenient to use because it discusses only the birds of Palau. However, because the book does not attempt to cover unusual migrants, serious birders will want to carry at least one other field guide with them.

Field Guide to the Birds of Palau was written to be distributed primarily in Palau's schools, with the Palau Bureau of Education funding its printing. Fortunately, the book is being sold to the public by the Belau National Museum (P.O. Box 666, Koror, Palau 96940) and can be mail ordered for \$10.00 per copy, including postage. I recommend this booklet to anyone interested in Micronesian ornithology and hope that other bird guides of similar quality can eventually be published for the remaining island groups in the region.

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Reef Fishes

MICRONESIAN REEF FISHES: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE CORAL REEF FISHES OF THE TROPICAL CENTRAL AND WESTERN PACIFIC. Robert F. Myers. Coral Graphics, Barrigada, Guam [P.O. Box 21153, GMF 96921] 1989. 298 p. \$US 45 (hardcover), \$US 33 (paper).

This is surely one of the most informative, attractive, and complete regional fish guides available. More than 1250 species of reef fishes (about 10% of the world's marine fish fauna) are featured in individual accounts, and most are illustrated with underwater color photos.

It is apparent that this book was a labor of love for the author, who is an active fish systematist as well as a true artist with the underwater camera. Not only did Myers write the text and take most of the book's thousand or so photos, he also prepared hundreds of line drawings and did his own typesetting.

Introductory material reviews the geography and

oceanography of Micronesia, reef habitat characteristics, Indo-Pacific marine zoogeography, ecology and behavior of reef fishes, and general anatomy and classification of fishes. The bulk of the book is devoted to accounts of the reef-associated species occurring within the upper 60 m of water around the islands of Micronesia (the Mariana, Caroline, and Marshall Islands plus Wake Island).

The individual species accounts contain scientific and common names, basic meristics, distributional records, and information on diet, habitat, and behavior. In addition to information from the literature, the author frequently includes his own observations from many years of studying reef fishes in Micronesia. For most species, the photographs and drawings provide sufficient information for their identification; for less distinctive groups, such as pipefishes and gobies, keys are provided for identification.

The book concludes with a valuable distributional checklist, a very complete bibliography of Micronesian fish references, and indices of scientific and common names.

The book is a very timely compilation of information on the fishes of Micronesia. The last 30 years

have seen a tremendous growth in interest in tropical reef fishes, with corresponding attention to their taxonomy. Greater understanding of systematic relationships among these species has resulted in many reclassifications and name changes. Myers' book brings the reader up to date with these changes. Although taxonomic studies will continue, the book provides a benchmark for students of Micronesian fishes.

Myers' book is essential for anyone interested in the fishes of Micronesia and is extremely useful for students of fish elsewhere in the Pacific (only 1.9% of the Micronesian marine fish fauna is endemic to the region). Its only shortcoming (which is a self-imposed one) is that common pelagic and deepwater fishery species (tunas, billfishes, deepwater snappers, etc.) are not included in the species accounts (although they are included in the distributional checklist). But perhaps we can look forward to a second volume including these species and the freshwater fishes of the region to complement the exceedingly fine work of Myers' current book.

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