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THE WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY BIRDS OF BRAZIL: THE ATLANTIC FOREST OF SOUTHEAST BRAZIL, INCLUDING SÃO PAULO AND RIO DE JANEIRO. By Robert S. Ridgely, John A. Gwynne, Guy Tudor, and Martha Argel. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, USA. 2016: xv + 415 pages. ISBN: 978-1-5017-0453-6. $35.00 (paperback).—Brazil was, until recently, the single extant South American country with a megadiverse avifauna lacking a comprehensive field guide for bird identification. I attribute this geographic coverage gap to the gargantuan size of the task: Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world, heart of the Amazon, a center of bird diversification, and home to some 1,900 species, many of them endemics.

The lack of field guides for some extraordinarily rich areas such as Brazil has been temporarily overcome by using books of adjacent areas (and often filling the remaining gaps with supplementary books). For example, R. T. Peterson and E .L. Chalif's *Mexican Birds*, published in 1973 (Houghton Mifflin Company, NY), took advantage of the existence of well-developed field guides for the United States and Canada ('North America') to cover Mexico. Peterson and Chalif illustrated only those birds not included in North America, gathered then-scant distributional data (no maps!), and wrote species accounts for them. This practice reduced the amount of work needed to deal with a new territory and made the task more manageable for the writers and artists (although it created a new complication: the need to carry two books in the field). The benefit of a supplementary book like this is that it extended its usefulness to adjacent countries. For over 20 years, one could use the Mexico guide to identify birds in Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, and other Central American countries to a lesser extent.

This approach has limitations, such as the distributional information missing for many species that one encounters by using a field guide devised for a neighboring territory. This lack of information increases the further away one gets from the guide's area of original coverage.

Brazil is a country that has been primarily covered with books from adjacent territories. A few weeks ago, I spoke briefly with Tom Schulenberg of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology about field guides for the entire South American continent and the role they played in Brazil. Schulenberg pointed out that nothing was available or useful for Brazil until S. L. Hilty and W. L. Brown published *The Birds of Colombia* in 1986 (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ). Hilty and Brown's book illustrates roughly one-half of the birds of South America and hence provided some help for people studying birds in Brazil, particularly those in areas adjacent to Colombia.

In 1989 and 1994, R. S. Ridgely and G. Tudor embraced and completed the project of writing two books for the entire continent's songbirds: the magnificent *Birds of South America, Volume I: The Oscine Passerines*, and *Birds of South America, Volume II: The Suboscine Passerines* (University of Texas Press, Austin, TX), respectively (from those books derived Ridgely and Tudor's 2009 *Field Guide to the Songbirds of South America* [University of Texas Press, Austin, TX]). Hilty's *Birds of Venezuela* (2002, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ), and Ridgely and Greenfield's *Birds of Ecuador* (2001, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY) added to what could be used to identify birds in the field in nearby Brazil. Some of them were (again) devised for adjacent territories, too bulky and encyclopedic for use in the field, or too coarse-grained for bird study in this country.

So for a date as late as the beginning of this decade there was nothing aimed at Brazil itself. Several hard-to-find books were published locally, exclusively in Brazilian Portuguese, or with

slightly different scopes than the standard field guide that ornithologists and bird watchers have grown accustomed to. Books by Tomas Sigrist, Rolf Grantsau, Edwin Willis, and other authors are out of print, largely inaccessible, and I could not find an easy way to get them. Van Perlo's 2009 *Field Guide to the Birds of Brazil* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK) can be credited with being the first book to cover the identification of the entire avifauna of Brazil, with the limitations of what an illustrated checklist can bring to the fine-grain identification of birds.

This is a long way to say that in spite of all these works Brazil remained as the greatest field guide gap in South America as recently as 2010, until now. The challenge of publishing field guides to cover the entire country has been taken by the Projeto Aves do Brasil, an initiative of the Wildlife Conservation Society Brazil. Kitty Liu, at Cornell University Press, told me this is planned to be a five-part set of field guides: *The Pantanal and Cerrado of Central Brazil* (published in 2010 by Gwynne et al., also available in Brazilian Portuguese), *The Atlantic Forest of Southeast Brazil* (reviewed here, published in 2016), and three more on the queue: the Northeast and Caatinga, Amazonia, and Southern Brazil.

The volume reviewed here is then the second of this series. It covers the Atlantic forest of southeast Brazil, locally known as Mata Atlântica. This field guide provides information for the identification of 927 bird species. The majority of them, 863, are illustrated in 368 color plates. Nearly 15% of them (140) are endemic, and another 104 are near-endemic. Ridgely and coauthors consider 83 of them are in under some threat category.

This field guide is a beautiful and compact book. It is 14 × 23 cm, 430 pages long, and weighs exactly 800 g. It is sturdy without being excessively thick. Same as many other field guides, the inner front cover explains the way species' maps are colored, the codes used for plumages, endemism, conservation status, state abbreviations, and other brief terms used throughout the book. The inner back cover in turn provides information on biome and elevational range differences that may be new to an expected target audience of people from the temperate region.

The book begins with a five-page introductory and acknowledgments section. In pages 1–29 the reader will find an introduction to the biodiversity and conservation highlights of the Atlantic Forest, a broad description of 12 types of habitat (some of them, such as restinga, Araucaria forest, and cerrado possibly new to outsiders), and miscellaneous conservation notes.

The front matter contains 35 other bird, habitat, or diagrammatic illustrations, most of them painted by J. A. Gwyne, as well as 35 color photographs that depict 12 major habitat types.

I really like the way the color plates are placed relative to species accounts. Color plates simply face the text and maps for each species. But this is not an easy job: field guides that cover a lot of material—either those whose scope is on extensive avifaunas with 1,000+ species (e.g., Hilty and Brown's *Birds of Colombia*), or that provide extensive data for each species treated, such as S. N. G. Howell and S. Webb's *Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America* (1995, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK)—typically place the color plates at the center of the book and print them in thick glossy paper. The rest of the book, printed in lighter weight, matte paper, sandwiches the color plates. Steve Howell once told me his species accounts were large to field guide standards by necessity: many of the data provided for each bird were unknown or only available in obscure literature. He considered it essential to have it published there, as well as to point out unknowns.

The downside of this type of guide is that it makes the book impractical for use in the field. I have seen many people ripping color-plate-sandwich field guides apart (and even binding the color plates separately) to make them easier to carry in the field. The color plates then become forever disassociated from essential information to accurately identify a bird in the field. The key additional data that species accounts provide, such as highlights of field marks, unique characteristics, range maps, and similar species that may be difficult to distinguish from under field conditions, are given secondary importance. I suspect this field guide model may be responsible for more identification errors than the alternative described below.

This book is not the case. This volume of the *Birds of Brazil* follows the model of Schulenberg et al.'s *Birds of Peru* (2007, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ), which presents only the

TABLE 1. Species coverage of the first two volumes of the Birds of Brazil series. The overlap of species illustrated in both field guides is large, 481 species.

Birds of Brazil Volume	N spp. illustrated	Species covered exclusively in this volume	Overlap with the other volume in the series
1 The Pantanal and Cerrado	740	259	65%
2 The Atlantic Forest of Southeast Brazil (this review)	927	446	52%

essential information needed to identify a bird (and a small range map) in a way that is as economical as possible so it can face the color plate where the species is illustrated (*Birds of Peru* is, to my knowledge, the first South American field guide for a very large avifauna not to follow the color-plate-sandwich field guide model). I am sure it is really challenging to reduce large amounts of information to very short and concise species accounts, but this *Birds of Brazil* field guide does it well.

The color plates are astounding and rival those of the most beautifully illustrated field guides that I have seen. This book is illustrated by a total of six artists: J. A. Gwynne, M. DiGiorgio, D. Dyer, B. Van Dusen, and my two personal favorites, S. Webb and G. Tudor. The latter is also the art director of this guide.

Color plates ($n = 368$) largely follow the traditional sequence of other field guides. They start with a seriema and end with oropendolas. Plate numbers do not exist—the upper right corner of each color plate is simply the corresponding page number, which I find very useful. Color plates don't look crowded. Each plate has a different number of species illustrated per page, from a minimum of two birds in page 33 to a maximum of 19 hummingbirds in page 191 (the mode is of four to five species per plate and about six to eight different plumages or color morphs for each of them). Species are labeled (not simply numbered) aside the actual illustration. All of them have its name in English (black capital letters) and Brazilian Portuguese (gray capital letters, right below the English name). I doubt most of these vernacular names are of true common use but artificially convened, like the ones in existence for the Spanish language.

In cases where different plumages are illustrated, the only additional labels are the male or female signs, adult and immature classes, and regional morphs with lettering such as A, B, C, etc. Each plate is signed by its author in the lower right corner.

I found a large redundancy between the two volumes published thus far. Depending on what volume you look at, between one-half and two-thirds of each book include species that have already been covered in the other one (Table 1).

Generally speaking, the 'reused' color plates of volume 2 are printed in slightly darker colors than the exact same plate in volume 1. Some color plates covering the same species in both volumes were entirely redone, in some cases by the same author who illustrated the original one. In two cases of recent species splits—Gray-crested Cacholote (*Pseudoseisura unirufa*)/Caatinga Cacholote (*P. cristata*) and White-crested Elaenia (*Elaenia albiceps*)/Chilean Elaenia (*E. chilensis*) for volumes 1 and 2 respectively—the exact same illustration is used for both of them.

Facing the plates, on the left side of the spread, are species accounts. These start with a brief heading for each family, a small dark gray background rectangle with white letters, the colloquial name of the group followed by a parenthesis with the scientific family name, and a brief description (2–4 lines), e.g., Swifts (Apodidae), Hummingbirds (Trochilidae), etc.

Some particularly diverse groups are singled out as well. They have a 2–3 line general description. These groups can be species-rich genera, such as *Picumnus*, *Veniliornis*, *Piculus*, etc., and less often morphological groups, e.g., Hawk-Eagles. I find these headings very informative in spite of being very brief.

Each species account starts with its English standardized names in bold capitals, scientific names, and size in metric and English systems. When species are country endemics, a tiny Brazil flag vignette starts the description of the species (half-flag for near-endemics). Species accounts have sufficient habitat, elevational, and seasonal information to make appropriate conjectures of

places and times where a species is likely to be found. Following that come field marks; the most critical ones are italicized. Behavioral notes, onomatopoeias of their vocalizations, and criteria to separate similar species in the field close each species section. The amount of superfluous information of species accounts varies from very little (excellent brief descriptions, for example, for flycatchers) to lots (for seriema and rhea, unmistakable birds with half-page descriptions).

To the right of each species description is a range map. All of them use the same map extent, and not different sized windows like other field guides. The background of each of them shows political divisions within the area of the field guide and highlight major rivers. Eight cities are marked with either a star (Brasília) or a circle (Gôiania, Curitiba, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Vitória, and Salvador).

The book ends with three indices that (unnecessarily) cover the same material separately (English, Brazilian Portuguese, and scientific names). Brazilian Portuguese orthography is carefully followed (e.g., in Brazilian Portuguese common names are common nouns and are not capitalized; names properly use all five diacritics and hyphenation, etc.).

As much as I loved reviewing this book and flipping through its pages, there is a single major issue I cannot understand: the decision to publish this guide in five volumes. One reason that comes to mind is that $175 USD for a complete set is more attractive than selling a single book at $35. I believe this has slowed the pace of publication of these guides (with 6 yrs separating the publication of each volume we can expect the complete set to be ready in a total of 24 yrs). The combined coverage of volumes 1 and 2 is 1,186 species, about two-thirds of all the birds of Brazil. The complete guide to the birds of this country could be only a third from being done! Yes, I understand packing 1,900 species in a single book is a very hard task to accomplish, but it has been done in the past.

I am sure not having this field guide in the past created a restless eagerness among ornithologists and bird watchers to have a proper book (or set of them). But I trust the highest expectations have been met. My personal opinion of this volume, and of the entire book series, is that this is a fantastic set that will greatly accelerate our knowledge of Brazilian birds. Precise, complete, comprehensive, and beautiful. A true landmark publication that will be hard to beat.

I wholeheartedly applaud the commitment of the WCS to also publish these volumes in Brazilian Portuguese. This is one of the most commendable gestures of this project: I know none of the guides produced for Latin American readerships has ever been a moneymaker for its publishers; they are done merely for its scientific and educational value. Parabéns por este livro extraordinário, trabalho excelente!—ERNESTO RUELAS INZUNZA, Instituto de Biotecnología y Ecología Aplicada, Universidad Veracruzana, Xalapa, Veracruz 91090, Mexico. e-mail: ruelas.uv@gmail.com