BOOK REVIEWS

THE BIRDS OF ST. LUCIA, WEST INDIES: AN ANNOTATED CHECK-LIST.—Allan R. Keith. 1997. British Ornithologists Union Check-list No. 15. Dorset Press, Dorchester, Dorset, UK. 176 pp. ISBN 0-907446-19-1. $45.00.

What a relief it would be to arrive at an island with a complete background of the avifauna in one volume. How nice it would be to avoid months or years just trying to figure out what is known and unknown about the island's birds. Well, for those visiting St. Lucia, you are in luck. If only there were a guide as comprehensive as *The Birds of St. Lucia* for each island in the West Indies. This book does not presume to be an identification guide; there are only a handful of bird plates, but instead it focuses on providing the reader with a complete introduction to the island's 162 recorded species. It is small enough to fit in a backpack and the sturdy binding appears ready to withstand field use.

There is a brief but thorough introduction to the political history, geology and geography, climate, and vegetation. In addition, the author has compiled a very useful list of ornithological exploration, including data from diverse sources, such as brief visits by tourists and testimonies of life-long residents. The final 57 pages of the introduction include descriptions of migration, breeding, zoogeography, and conservation on St. Lucia. The migration section also includes theories on species dispersion. The zoogeography, or biogeography, section is an exhaustive account of the possible origins of each resident species and may not appeal to all readers. The numerous accompanying tables and maps provide excellent detail and perspective.

The systematic list includes the English, scientific, and, when available, St. Lucian name for each species based on the 1983 American Ornithologists' Union check-list. Six categories of abundance are used. Most accounts also outline a species's distribution in North America and within the West Indies. Some species accounts contain interesting data from Dominica, Martinique, and Barbados in order to provide context. When possible, descriptions of nests and eggs are provided. The number of collected specimens is also given.

For those who are wondering why Bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*) or some other species is not included in the check-list, an appendix provides accounts for species of uncertain occurrence, wherein the author explains why specific records were not accepted. Other appendices list the number of St. Lucian specimens housed at each collection and recoveries of banded birds in St. Lucia. The fourth appendix provides an excellent account of each of the three endemic species and three subspecies, including distribution, population, ecology, threats, and conservation measures.

There are 40 color photo plates which represent habitats, topography, and points of interest very well. There are also photos of the St. Lucia Black Finch (*Melanospiza richardsoni*) and Lesser Antillean Bullfinch (*Loxigilla noctis*) on facing pages for comparison. The St. Lucia White-breasted Thrasher (*Ramphocinclus brachyurus sanctaeluciae*) and St. Lucia Oriole (*Icterus laudabilis*) photos are provided as well. It's not clear why a photo of the regionally distributed and very common Bananquit (*Coereba flaveola*) was chosen for inclusion, when perhaps a plate of the possibly-extinct Semper's Warbler (*Leucopeza semperi*) might have been more appropriate.

There are separate indices for common and scientific names, but unfortunately not for local names. An impressive and apparently complete 314 references are listed, especially useful as it relates to St. Lucia's endemic species.

Because it was printed almost a decade ago, it is to be expected that information has since been updated. For example, Brown Pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) are described as having only one breeding site in the Lesser Antilles (Antigua). We found several misspellings and punctuation errors. Despite repeated searches through the list of abbreviations and sections of the introduction, it was not clear what C/2 meant in the breeding section of certain accounts. Also, the acronym JWPT appeared to be without explanation. A listing of the known predators of St. Lucia, separated into native and non-native, would be useful as would a simple reference list of bird species and their abundance.

However, despite these small shortcomings, the careful attention to detail given to each subject cannot be overlooked. The author's obvious concern for and devotion to the welfare of the island's avifauna is clear. The Birds of St. Lucia is highly recommended for both recreational birders and academic ornithologists with an interest in the West Indies.—NATALIA COLLIER AND ADAM C. BROWN, *Environmental Protection In the Caribbean, 200 Dr. M.L. King Jr. Blvd., Riviera Beach, FL 33404; e-mail: info@epicislands.org.*