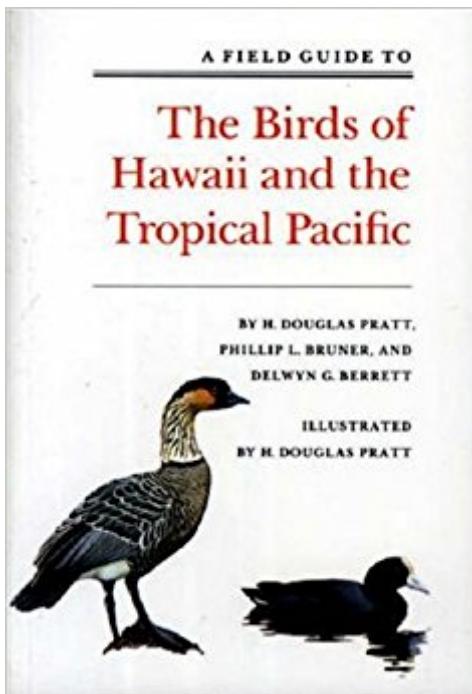


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A Field Guide To The Birds Of Hawaii And The Tropical Pacific



Synopsis

This is the first field guide to the identification of the birds of the islands of the tropical Pacific, including the Hawaiian Islands, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, southeastern Polynesia, and Micronesia. It is intended both as a reference for the expert and as an introduction to birding in the region for the novice. Small enough to be carried afield, it contains much previously unpublished information about behavior, vocalizations, ecology, and distribution. The forty-five color plates depict all plumages of all bird species that breed in the islands, as well as of those that regularly visit them and the surrounding oceans, and of most species believed to be extinct on the islands. Black-and-white figures show many of the rarer visitors. Introductory sections discuss the tropical Pacific as an environment for birds, problems of birding on islands, and bird conservation. Appendixes include maps of the island groups and a thorough bibliography.

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Customer Reviews

Pratt, Bruner, and Dickinson have produced a superb field guide completely covering all the islands of the tropical Pacific from Hawai'i west through Micronesia. This is a true field guide: it gives the field marks of every species, notes problems in identification with special emphasis on distinguishing similar species, and wastes no space on matters not related to identification. (The exception is that Pratt, a significant ornithologist as well as an expert in identification, summarizes controversies in classification where appropriate.) The text is organized by order and family, not by region, so the flycatchers of Tahiti appear next to the flycatchers of Palau rather than near other

Tahitian birds. But the illustrations are grouped by region: Samoan land birds appear together, regardless of relationships. This greatly facilitates use in the field. The illustrations are paintings, not photographs, which allows the authors to show similar birds in identical poses as well as eliminating the accidental marks which appear in even the best photographs and can confuse the user. The authors have chosen to include the extinct birds of the region as well as the living ones. This puts a certain amount of "deadwood" on the illustration pages, which may be detrimental. But, considering that more than one "extinct" bird has been found after being missing for nearly a hundred years, it is probably worth the minor inconvenience. I have used the book extensively in Hawai'i and believe it to be the best guide Hawai'i's birds. I would not consider being without it anywhere in its area of coverage.

Still the best field guide to the birds of the tropical Pacific, Pratt's book is now over 20 years old and in need of revision. The bird life of Hawaii is in a constant state of flux, with species arriving and becoming extinct every decade. One of the most common species today, the African Silverbill, was rare when Pratt's guide was published, so is completely missing from the book. Nesting information, feeding habits, and other aspects of natural history are given very little attention. So, while the serious birder will want to own the book and carry it in the field, it is now necessary to purchase a second book to fill in all the missing information that has come to light in the last two decades. For the birder visiting Hawaii, I recommend also carrying the Hawaii Audubon Society's Hawaii's Birds. It is a lightweight supplement that includes all the new species that one is likely to encounter as well as much more information regarding the habits of each bird.

This field guide has excellent sketches of birds but the layout is quite awkward. This guide like most if not all guides breaks down the birds by family groups. This works well for most areas but not Hawaii. As an example, on the first page for Crows and Honeycreepers there are six birds listed, three are extinct, the other three birds all exist on separate islands, so if I am birding on Kauai and I look on this particular page there is only one bird I would have any chance of seeing but I still have five other birds on the page as a distraction. On the other pages there are on average 8-10 birds per page but once again some are extinct (and not boldly labeled as such) while there may only be one or two birds from each island on the pages. My recommendation to make it easier to ID birds in the field would be to put all the extinct Hawaiian endemic birds on two or more pages (since there are so many of them) for emphasis and then have separate pages for each island. Since there are so few birds to be found on each of the Hawaiian islands versus say the tropical forests of Costa Rica, I

believe my recommended format would be much less frustrating than the current format of the book to use in the field.

A comprehensive book, but the illustrations are small, and truthfully useless in the field. For some one who travels the islands extensively or wants a home review volume it's possibly o.k. I left mine in a hotel room in Kauai- I have 20 or 30 at home so that must tell you something. I'd go with Jim Denny's for rapid field identification.

This is a huge area of the world and having a book that covers these islands is a great task. The artwork by H. Douglas Pratt is excellent and the species accounts are good with notes about appearance, habits, occurrence, description and other names where they apply. There are no range maps though, which when covering an area so large with many migrants and pelagic birds can be a bit of a problem. There are several maps near the end that cover the areas the book encompasses as well as area checklists covering island groups. Overall this is a very good book and if you are traveling anywhere in the Pacific this is the book to have.

Comprehensive and complete for tropical pacific birds. I like the drawings and field mark notations. Only negative is that there is so much material, in the field you can get bogged down in minor species from far away (from Hawaii).

For a person who loves science, theory, and information, this book is unparalleled in the field. It's fascinating reading whether you are interested in it as a field guide or not. There are a lot of islands covered so there is much information not needed if you visit only one of them. But it may be the only place to find bird information on some obscure places. I didn't take this with me in the field in Hawai'i because I think there are better field guide books for that area.

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