

WILDLIFE OF THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN. Steve Holliday and Gill Holliday. 2025. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, USA. 320 pp. ISBN 978-0-691-19981-8. Price \$29.95.

The latest offering from the WILDGuides series from Princeton University Press, *Wildlife of the Eastern Caribbean*, beautifully covers common birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, crabs, dragonflies, damselflies, and butterflies of the Eastern Caribbean. From the Virgin Islands in the north through Grenada in the south, this photographic identification guide seeks to “encourage a wider appreciation and understanding of the wildlife of the Eastern Caribbean” and encourages readers to “get out and about to enjoy wildlife.” Towards this end, I believe the authors meet their goal nicely. Here we focus on the guide’s coverage of the birds of the region.

Introductory material in *Wildlife of the Eastern Caribbean* highlights the geology and climate of the region, but focuses on their contribution to the diverse habitats and vegetation of the islands. Habitats are grouped into six types: coasts and inshore waters, mangroves, wetlands, modified land, scrub and dry forest, and rainforest and elfin forest. While less detailed than often seen in field guides, this level of detail is probably preferable in a guide that seeks to appeal to a broader audience. The habitat descriptions are well written, with particularly descriptive language, such as “streams tumble,” “swirling cloud, stunted elfin forests,” “strong winds and salt spray,” and “rugged, heavily fissured cliffs,” that are evocative of the islands.

As with most identification guides, this book also opens with maps of the region. These are helpful to orient those unfamiliar with the Eastern Caribbean, but are not suitable for any type of navigation or site selection. Maps that are slightly more detailed are provided for each island group, along with short descriptions of several locations on each of the major islands to view wildlife. Most sites are well-established national parks or visitor attractions, but all appear to be good for observing birds. These site accounts also include brief lists of single-island endemics, restricted-range endemics, and specialty species, many of which are birds. The authors also acknowledge BirdsCaribbean by specifically referring readers to the Caribbean Birding Trail for more detailed information on birdwatching opportunities.

Wildlife of the Eastern Caribbean highlights approximately 80 species of waterbirds and 115 species of landbirds, as birds most likely to be seen in the region or of high interest to visitors. Species accounts are short but informative, and include size measurements, identification tips in the form of field marks and distinctive features of the bird, and characterizations of the bird’s song or call. Also included is a nice description of the bird’s habitat affinities, and behavioral cues that often aid in its identification, from preferred food, to foraging style, to styles of perching

and movement. The selection and concise descriptions of these attributes are notable. Each species is illustrated with well-chosen photographs that include male and female plumages, but may include juvenile plumages as well. In the case of the Neotropical migrants, non-breeding plumages are also highlighted. This attention to variation in plumages even extends at times to regional differences across islands, as in *Coereba flaveola* (Banan-aquit).

Finally, I think it is worth noting the authors’ attention to the conservation issues that these birds (and other wildlife featured in the guide) face in the Eastern Caribbean, and indeed, the world. As in most modern field guides, a section on conservation is included that highlights these challenges, and the guide draws attention to how human residents of the region are responding to these threats. However, what I found particularly valuable was how the authors go beyond this one section on conservation by drawing attention to conservation threats throughout the guide. From their description of habitats, to the flagging of threatened and endemic species within the species accounts, to the prominence in calling out of the threats contributing to the threatened status of each species, conservation issues permeate the guide in a way that highlights our collective need to act. This is an important contribution, perhaps especially when found within a guide that will likely be used as an introduction to wildlife in the region.

Overall, I found *Wildlife of the Eastern Caribbean* to be a well-written and pleasingly designed book that does very well as an introduction to the birds of the region, while also providing information on other local wildlife in a single volume. The guide is easy to use, the printing is of high quality, and the soft, flexible cover and sturdy binding look to be of the high quality necessary for a well-used field guide. Many birders will prefer one of the available complete guides to all of the birds of the region, or of a particular island group. *Wildlife of the Eastern Caribbean*, however, is a great alternative for the more casual observer of birds with perhaps a broader interest in wildlife identification.

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