

warblers); and a rather diverse collection of more particular aspects of Italian bird life, my favourite of which was nectar-feeding behaviour by trans-Saharan migrants during spring migration.

The book represents a landmark in Italian ornithology and an essential reference for anybody interested in the subject, but it has an importance beyond that, since it can serve as an ideal platform to stimulate further research. One of the striking patterns emerging from the volume is how little we know about the evolutionary and behavioural ecology of most Italian birds. Research in these fields has been traditionally led by ornithologists in Northern Europe. However, Italian species and populations represent an ideal counterpoint because they have often evolved under the selective pressures exerted by habitats (e.g. Mediterranean or Alpine), which can differ drastically from the selective pressures faced by the more intensely studied populations in Northern Europe, particularly under rapid patterns of climate change. The reviewers of volume 6 (*Ibis* 153: 442) argued that the fact that the series is written in Italian will enable the authors to engage with the community of amateur ornithologists who have contributed so fundamentally to Italian ornithology. While I share this sentiment, I felt that a brief English summary of each species (the use of English in the volume is limited to the species' name, and a list of morphological terms in an appendix) would have made the volume accessible to a wider readership, reaching out more globally to all biologists interested in the Italian region.

Tommaso Pizzari

DE BOER, B., NEWTON, E. & RESTALL, R. **Birds of Aruba, Curaçao and Bonaire. (Helm Field Guides.)** 176 pages, 70 colour plates by Robin Restall, 5 colour photographs, 4 maps. London: Christopher Helm, 2012. Paperback, £24.99, ISBN 978-1-4081-3727-7. Website: <http://www.bloomsbury.com>.

For those overwhelmed by the ornithological riches of South America and preferring to go birdwatching in relative ease, the islands of Aruba, Curaçao and Bonaire, situated just north of Venezuela in the southern Caribbean and part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, are something to consider. They have opened up for tourism and cruise companies increasingly include them on their Caribbean itineraries, with Aruba catering more for the high-end tourist and Bonaire gaining greater popularity as a destination for nature lovers.

In the 1950s, Professor Karel Voous's checklists of the islands were amongst the first scientific ornithological overviews of any island (group) in the Caribbean region, and the latest instalment by T.G. Prins *et al.* was published in *Ardea* 97 [2009]: 137–268. What was

missing was an illustrated guide and this gap has now been filled by Bart de Boer and his co-authors.

Ornithologically, the three small islands (190, 444 and 288 km²) punch well above their weight. The resident bird fauna is an impoverished representation of that found in northern South America – where we may typically find several members of a group on the mainland, the islands support only one. This is compensated by the occurrence of migrants, not in very large numbers since the islands lie between the two main North American migration routes, but off-course visitors turn up from both flyways. De Boer *et al.* note that sooner or later all North American migrant warblers (Parulidae) will be recorded in the southern Caribbean (many have occurred already). There are 72 species of residents (55–57 species per island), but this number is quadrupled when the migrants are included.

The layout matches that of most field guides, with some introductory chapters, an overview of worthwhile birding sites, a few paragraphs on conservation, and at the end a list of all the birds and their occurrence on each of the three islands. Accounts of 288 species provide English, Papiamento (Aruba and Curaçao/Bonaire spelling) and Dutch names, species descriptions with key characteristics in bold, voice, habitat and habits, and status. There is almost total agreement between the list of Prins *et al.* (2009) and De Boer *et al.* and I could not find any omissions.

The illustrations look familiar given that many were taken from published field guides – *Birds of Northern South America* (Restall *et al.* 2006) and *Birds of Trinidad and Tobago* (Kenefick *et al.* 2011), reviewed, respectively, in *Ibis* 149: 868–869 and 153: 910. For several endemic taxa that are recognizably different in the field from their mainland counterparts (e.g. Brown-throated Parakeet *Aratinga pertinax arubensis/xanthogenia*, Barn Owl *Tyto alba bargei*, Bananaquit *Coereba flaveola bonairensis/uropygialis*), Restall prepared illustrations specifically for this field guide. Almost 1000 illustrations depict every distinctive subspecies and morph and the immature or juvenile plumage of many species. The illustrations are often not particularly lifelike but they are more than adequate for identification purposes. For Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera* and Blue-winged Warbler *V. cyanoptera* their hybrids ('Lawrence's Warbler' and 'Brewster's Warbler') are depicted, even though Golden-winged Warbler and Blue-winged Warbler have each been recorded only once. But it is good to be prepared.

Increasingly, field guides are seen as being of importance for promoting conservation. De Boer *et al.* briefly describe all 21 Important Bird Areas on the islands, ranging from the tiny Aruban keys with important breeding colonies of terns (Laridae) to the larger Washington-Slagbaai National Park (Yellow-shouldered Parrot *Amazona barbadensis*) and Pekelmeer Saltworks

(an active salt extraction site, with a colony of up to 7000 American Flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber*) on Bonaire, and globally threatened species are flagged up in the checklist. König and Weick (*Owls of the World*, Christopher Helm, 2008) recognized the local Barn Owl as a species endemic to the island of Curaçao (it is currently unclear which taxon inhabits Bonaire). This treatment has not been followed by De Boer *et al.*, but if König and Weick are indeed correct, *Tyto bargei* has one of the smallest distribution ranges of any owl in the world, making it a clear conservation priority. I hope that the publication of this field guide will spur a greater interest in bird conservation on the islands. Confident that it will pass the litmus test of being of real use in the field, I will make sure it's in my backpack when I am heading to the islands next time.

Vincent Nijman

DIERSCHKE, R., DIERSCHKE, V., HÜPPOP, K., HÜPPOP, O. & JACHMANN, K.F. **Die Vogelwelt der Insel Helgoland.** 629 pages, 505 figures, 615 photographs, 157 maps. Helgoland: OAG Helgoland, 2011. Hardback, € 55.00, ISBN 978-3-00-035437-3. Website: <http://www.oag-helgoland.de>.

Helgoland (or in many English texts Heligoland), the only deep-sea German island with seabird nesting cliffs, has been supplying highly valuable avifaunal data for around 170 years. Given the high number of rarities, it has become a magnet for innumerable ornithologists. Its outstanding importance was well known as early as 1891, when Heinrich Gätke published his book *Die Vogelwarte Helgoland* (English edition: *Heligoland as an Ornithological Observatory*, 1895). He was also the founding father in spirit of the scientific station 'Vogelwarte Helgoland' from 1910, the later Institute for Avian Research. Since then, there have been changes of all sorts: political, orographic, structural, and economic, but they have not adversely affected the importance of the island for birds or its fascination for professional ornithologists and birdwatchers alike.

So, after 120 years, it is now time for a comprehensive and up-to-date book that summarizes the wealth of ornithological data collected in that period to create a modern overview of the island and its birds. The gestation has been long, but at last it has arrived and really it leaves nothing to be desired; indeed, the only negative thing to be said is that those with little space left on their bookshelves might groan at another tome weighing in at 2.36 kg.

The general introductory section of around 90 pages deals with the island environment, the history of bird research on Helgoland, the breeding birds, bird migration, winter visitors, vagrants, and study methods. There are also special themed sections in those chapters that

give additional information on the North Atlantic oscillation, nocturnal mass migration, long-term changes in trapping numbers, and observation and documentation intensity. But the main emphasis of the book (464 pages) is naturally on the individual species, a grand total of 426 (!) wild birds that have been recorded on Helgoland as breeding species, resting migrants, passage migrants, or winter visitors. Depending on frequency of occurrence and level of information, the species accounts range from one-third of a page for extreme rarities to almost five pages for important breeding birds like Common Guillemot *Uria aalge*, of which there can be up to 3000 breeding pairs. The texts are supported by excellent and helpful diagrams, such as on phenology (using 5-day intervals, often differentiated by sex and/or age), population trends over the years, or maps of ring recoveries. Additionally, almost every species account is accompanied by a photograph (a total of 615 by 80 photographers), those of the many vagrants often being selected record shots.

Depending on available data there is much additional information in the species accounts or as separate text boxes on subjects such as diet or stopover behaviour on the island. Resting geese, raptors that have drifted off course, raptor diet, wader stopovers, and the killing of birds in southern Europe are among the subjects discussed in text boxes.

The species accounts are comprehensive and detailed, being based on an analysis of the wealth of material in the extensive and systematic observation records compiled over the last century and a half in the regular logbook kept by Gätke since 1847 and later by the observatory, as well as the database of the *Ornithologische Arbeitsgemeinschaft Helgoland* (OAG) [*Ornithological Working Group*]. Also included are the data from the trapping and ringing operations, along with scientific findings from the work at the Institute for Avian Research. Since 1997, the Helgoland Avifaunal Committee [*HAK*] has been responsible for the evaluation of all rarity sightings on the island. Its careful and critical scrutiny of all such records means that the articles on vagrants in the work are particularly valuable. Observations that have been rejected are not simply ignored but are listed at the end of the species accounts, as are records of apparent escapes from captivity.

The book closes with a chapter on local bird names in the Helgoland dialect (historically 'close' to Old English), a literature list of almost 1070 titles, plus indexes of the English, German, and scientific names. There are English summaries of all sections of the book and translations of all illustration captions, which should ensure the international attention that a work of this quality demands.

So is there nothing to criticize? The simple answer would be that there must be in such a voluminous