

Birds on the Go: 'Hawaii's Birds' and 'A Pocket Guide to Hawaii's Birds'

Hawaii Audubon Society. *Hawaii's Birds* (6th ed.). Honolulu, Hawaii: Hawaii Audubon Society [Distributed by Island Heritage Publishing] (850 Richards Street, Suite 505, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813), 2005. 141pp. ISBN: 1889708003 (pa), \$10.99. Index. Bib. Illus (color).

Pratt, H. Douglas. *A Pocket Guide to Hawai'i's Birds*. Honolulu, Hawaii: Mutual Publishing (1215 Center Street, Suite 210, Honolulu, Hawaii 96816), 1996. 112pp. ISBN: 1566471451 (pa), \$9.95. Index. Bib. Illus (color).

As an amateur birdwatcher for the past four years in Hawaii, two small field guides have been my constant companions on various treks through the landscape of Hawaii: *Hawaii's Birds*, by the Hawaii Audubon Society, and *A Pocket Guide to Hawai'i's Birds*, by H. Douglas Pratt. These two books might not actually fit in my pockets, but tuck handily into a knapsack and are perfect for both quick and easy on-the-spot reference and charming anecdotes about a particular bird.

The Hawaii Audubon Society (<http://www.hawaiiadubon.com>) was founded in 1939 and published the first edition of *Hawaii's Birds* in 1967. Subsequent editions have continued to incorporate up-to-date scientific research on and statuses of endemic and introduced birds. Additionally, the latest edition, 2005, is visually a significant improvement to the 1997 edition. Each section is now color-coded for faster reference and the charts and symbols are far easier to read, while the basic organization remains the same. The book is divided into five habitat sections (marine birds, wetland birds, open country birds, forest birds, widespread and urban birds), with birds in each section grouped by family. The book provides information on distribution, description, voice, and habitat for each bird, a photo of the bird (though a drawing may be provided instead for those very rare birds), as well as a denotation for status: endangered, endemic, indigenous, alien, and visitor. There are also maps in the back with "popular birding sites" and a list of birds one might see there.

Author H. Douglas Pratt, Research Curator of Birds at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences (<http://www.naturalsciences.org>), is an internationally-recognized ornithologist, writer, photographer and illustrator, and is considered the leading expert on the Hawaiian Honeycreeper. He has written several guides to the birds of Hawaii, including *A Pocket Guide to Hawai'i's Birds*. This book is actually a miniature version of one of Pratt's coffee table books, *Hawai'i's Beautiful Birds*, a collection of photographs, anecdotes and information about Hawaii's birds and their environment. While the book can serve as a reference guide for the beginner birdwatcher, it is not intended as such. Rather, it is best used as a kind of list of trivia about birds and a source for recommendations on where to see them, in addition to a brief history of the native birds

of Hawaii. The book is organized roughly by habitat and each section provides a narrative about that environment and its inhabitants; individual birds are best found using the index in the back. Pratt also includes a list of twelve birding “hotspots” in the back, with a description and directions on how to get there.

While neither book is comprehensive, used together they can inform an amateur birdwatcher as to the identification of and background information about the most common birds. *Hawaii's Birds* can certainly be used as a basic field guide, but does not include much information on distinguishing the genders or juveniles of its birds. *A Pocket Guide* contains many beautiful photographs and its narrative is clear and often charming, but it gives only just enough information to make a basic identification and not enough to distinguish between similar birds. Readers looking for more comprehensive information may turn to Pratt's *Field Guide to the Birds of Hawai'i and the Tropical Pacific* (1987), a proper field guide unfortunately not updated since its first publication, or his *Enjoying Birds in Hawai'i* (3rd ed., 2002) a more recent book on finding birding sites in Hawaii with some bird identification information. Other good birdwatching books include Rick Soehren's *Birdwatcher's Guide to Hawai'i* (1996), a site-specific guide to bird watching, and the field guide *Hawaiian Birdlife*

Overall, *Hawaii's Birds* and *A Pocket Guide to Hawai'i's Birds* are not thorough enough for more serious birdwatchers, but for those who need a quick reference guide or for beginning birdwatchers with an interest in the history of Hawaiian birds, these will do very well. Both are suitable for public libraries, but academic libraries or specialized collections will wish to obtain other more comprehensive guides to supplement them.

(April 2008)

Other Books mentioned in this review:

- BERGER, Andrew. *Hawaiian Birdlife* (2nd ed.). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1981.
- PRATT, H. Douglas. *Field Guide to the Birds of Hawai'i and the Tropical Pacific*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- ---. *Enjoying Birds in Hawai'i* (3rd ed.). Honolulu: Mutual Pub., 2002.
- SOEHREN, Rick. *Birdwatcher's Guide to Hawai'i* . Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996.