

REVIEW

Parrots of the World, by Joseph M. Forshaw. 2010. Princeton Field Guides, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey. 336 pp. ISBN13: 978-0-691-14285-2. \$29.95 paperback.

Parrots of the World is the latest in the distinguished series of field guides published by Princeton University Press. Most field guides, of course, deal with specific geographic regions, but there are now guides appearing that include all species found worldwide in particular taxonomic groups. This format has advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, these guides are unlikely to be useful in the field because they cover only a small part of the avifauna in an area at any one time. On the other hand, they offer the opportunity to deal in detail with the characteristics of each subspecies. Descriptions of subspecies occupy much of the text for many species, a feature that I found very useful. Indeed, for birdwatchers interested in “banking” subspecies that are likely to be elevated to full species in the future, the text does a nice job of stating which are well defined, which may represent different species, and which are “poorly differentiated.” Subspecies are also divided into groups that share field traits (i.e., possible splits) and those that seem to vary clinally or interbreed with other subspecies (unlikely to be split).

Each species account also describes the main field marks, the distribution (accompanied by a map indicating the range of each subspecies), elevational ranges, abundance, habitat, conservation status, comparisons with similar species, and a list of localities where the bird is especially likely to be observed. As might be expected of the author, who has published extensively on parrots, the information is accurate, at least for the species that I know well from my own experience. The range maps are not especially detailed. It is, for example, quite difficult to tell exactly where each parrot occurs in the complex matrix of habitats in the mountains of Peru. The conservation information is quite up-to-date and is also depressing: roughly a third of all species are listed as threatened or near-threatened.

The choice of English names differs from that of many other recent treatments such as the Clements *Checklist of Birds of the World*. In general Forshaw is more likely than Clements to favor terms based on people’s names (e.g., Desmarest’s Fig-Parrot rather than Large Fig Parrot *Psittaculirostris desmarestii*) and to adopt more avicultural names (e.g., amazon, conure). The taxonomic treatment also differs from Clements in a few places; most Australian rosellas, for example, are treated as subspecies rather than full species.

The artwork by Frank Knight serves the field guide well. Mostly, the illustrations are in field-guide style showing the major subspecies and accompanied by dorsal and ventral illustrations of outstretched wings and bodies. Color saturation of the plates is excellent and the proportions are generally accurate, although the heads of some of the species, especially in plates 46-58, seem rather small. Rarely, species have illustrations of key habitats (e.g., plate 52) or behavior (e.g., trunk climbing on plate 29).

Parrots of the World will be a valuable addition to the libraries of most serious birdwatchers, especially those who travel extensively, and for those who raise parrots and wish to know more about their pets. This volume, however, is unlikely to be used much in the field, except perhaps for regions such as Australia where a very high proportion of the species are parrots.—SCOTT K. ROBINSON, *Florida Museum of Natural History, P.O. Box 117800, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32611.*