

## BOOK REVIEWS

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**Birds of Southern South America and Antarctica.**—Martín R. de la Peña & Maurice Rumboll. 1998. Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., London. 304 pp., 97 color plates, 5 black-and-white plates (by Gustavo Carrizo, Aldo A. Chiappe, Luis Huber, and Jorge R. Mata), distribution maps, indices to scientific and English names. ISBN 0 00 2200775. Soft cover, £19.99.

This “Collins Illustrated Checklist” is a pocket-sized field guide to the birds of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Paraguay, as well as of parts of Bolivia (its southern third) and parts of southern Brazil (Rio Grande do Sul and adjacent areas). Co-author Maurice Rumboll explains in his preface that this book is an English language adaptation of the now classic work by Martín R. de la Peña, “Guía de las Aves Argentinas... .” The new volume does not include much information from the earlier work (the much more complete descriptions, data on behavior, nests, eggs, habitat and geographic distribution were all omitted), but it has been expanded taxonomically and geographically to cover other countries than Argentina. I have earlier reviewed de la Peña's (then) available five volumes, published in 1988, 1989, 1992 (two volumes) and 1994 (Ornitol. Neotrop. 8: 208, 1997).

The present book is indeed, as indicated on the front and back covers and on the spine, an “illustrated checklist.” The introduction (pages 7–9) supposedly indicated sources of information, area and species covered, nomenclature, identification, appearance, habits and behavior, habitat, occurrence, and voice, but the text is, in fact, surprisingly uninformative on all these points. The black and white drawing of a bird, on page 10, giving

the “parts of a bird,” is also less informative than similar sketches in most other modern field guides. It is also unclear exactly what geographical areas are covered besides Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Paraguay, which seem to be fully included. It is finally unclear how many species are included (I did not count them). The bulk of the book (pages 11–211, but they are unpaginated!) consists of 97 numbered color plates, illustrating between 2 species (Plate 1, the two species of Rheidae) and 20 species (plate 70, several Tyrannidae). The format is similar throughout the plates section, with text on the left page and plate on the right facing page. Each bird on a plate is identified with a number, which permits quick reference with the facing text. In some instances, when more than about a dozen birds are illustrated on a plate, the accompanying text spills over to another page. Thus plate 65 includes 14 species of Furnariidae but the text on the left facing page only includes 13. The text for the 14th species is located at the top of the next page of text. The entry for each species included in the book is exceedingly short. It includes the English and Latin names, one or more vernacular names (for examples the Spanish names used in Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia, and the Portuguese name used in Brazil), the length in cm, the habitat in one or a few words, an abbreviated plumage description, and, for most species, a brief description of voice (by Roberto Straneck, an outstanding expert on the vocalizations of birds in the Southern Cone).

The plates are on the whole quite attractive, and seem to have been taken from the plates in de la Peña's earlier volumes cited

above. Some plates appear to be new, for example those illustrating Procellariiformes, whereas others have been modified and others still include additional birds. I could not discover how many plates were executed by each of the four excellent artists identified on the title page: Gustavo Carrizo, Aldo Chiappe, Luis Huber, and Jorge Mata. Some plates are signed (for instance those of Falconiformes by Luis Huber), but the great majority are not. It might be possible to identify the artists of many other plates by reference with the earlier volumes, where the artist's name was clearly indicated at the bottom of most plates. Many of those, by the way, were by Luis Huber. It is a pity that the work of each of these artists, whose work is absolutely fundamental to such an illustrated checklist, should not be clearly acknowledged.

Five pages of black and white plates (labelled A-E, on unnumbered pages 213–217; artist?), illustrate hawks in flight (undersides only). Pages 218–291 contain distribution maps (of all species? I did not check this). Except for page 291, which contains 3 maps, all the others have 16 maps each. Each map is identified with the English name of the species and a number. Thus 3.9 (Patagonian Tinamou) refers to Plate 3, bird number 9, which is indeed *Tinamotis ingoufi*. A very short bibliography of sixteen titles (page 292) and indices to scientific and English names end the volume.

How adequate is this new guide for field identification in southern South America? I stress here that I have not had the opportunity of testing it in the field. However, I have done so extensively for its five-volume predecessor, which I found useful as a complement to the field guide by Tito Narosky and Darío Yzurieta (“Guía para la Identificación de las Aves de Argentina y Uruguay”, first Spanish edition 1987; I reviewed this and other editions in *Ornitol. Neotrop.* 8: 214–215, 225, 226, 1997). Even though the plates

are attractive, they often are not fully sufficient in the field. This defect, together with the extremely abbreviated text of the new book, which gives no truly diagnostic field characters, diminishes the field usefulness of “Birds of Southern South America and Antarctica.” Morphologically distinctive species will pose no problem; others, however, the little brown jobs, will. Nevertheless, the book will render great services because it is so compact and because it lists and depicts (hopefully) all the species occurring in a vast area of southern South America. Workers in Uruguay, Paraguay, and southern Brazil, especially, should find this feature useful. For these reasons, this illustrated checklist is a welcome addition to the literature on South American birds.—FRANÇOIS VUILLEUMIER