

*BOOK REVIEW*

A GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Richard French. Livingston Publishing Company, Pennsylvania, 1973  
490 pp. 28 colour plates, 8 full page portraits, 27 black and white  
drawings, 13 photographs. Price about TT \$25.00.

This compact book is an essential field guide for all those who watch birds in Trinidad and Tobago. It is also a valuable ornithological reference work and will be useful to anyone visiting the northern coastal region of South America. The concise descriptions of the plumage and voice of each of more than 400 species emphasise the field characters which can be used for identification. There are 25 species illustrated in black and white and 304 species illustrated in colour by John O'Neill. These illustrations are of such a high standard that they must establish O'Neill as one of the world's foremost bird artists and, together with the splendid portraits of a further eight species by Don Eckelberry, they make the book attractive to everyone, not just to ornithologists. The legends to the plates include the English and scientific names. I have found the book easier to use if the page number of the text dealing with the species is marked next to each name on the legend.

It is also useful to add the Plate-reference in the index.

In addition to details of methods of identification, Richard French's text deals with the habitat and status, range and subspecies, measure-

ments, food, nesting and behaviour of each species. This information is based partly on observations by earlier writers but owes much to recent original studies by the author and by Dr. and Mrs. David Snow. The first thirty pages of the book are a general introduction to the natural history of Trinidad and Tobago, with particular reference to birds. A section on the geography, climate, and vegetation of the island is of value to those interested in any aspect of the fauna and flora. Other sections include accounts of the history of ornithology in Trinidad and Tobago, the ecology and distribution of birds, their breeding and migration. An extensive bibliography is particularly useful. This book is much better than that of Herklots in every way except, perhaps, for detailed descriptions of the plumage of birds in the hand. Many mistakes in Herklots' book are corrected and a very large amount of new information has been added. The common name used for each bird is that which is internationally used but alternative names are also given. It is a pity that, since the cost of books has increased, this is not a cheap book but it is certainly good value for money and this, the first publication of the Asa Wright Nature Centre, offers pleasure and scientific information to many.

D. M. Broom,  
Zoology Dept.,  
Univ. of Reading, England.

#### THE ASA WRIGHT NATURE CENTRE

The Centre situated in the beautiful Arima Valley offers residential and day visitor facilities to anyone wishing to study or simply enjoy the natural history of the area.

By becoming a FRIEND OF SPRING HILL (\$5.00 TT annually) you can make use of the facilities of the Centre and receive issues of Spring Hill – Simla News, a regular newsletter.

Advance booking is necessary for visits to the oil bird cave.

All communications (enquiries, bookings etc) should be sent to: – The Asa Wright Nature Centre, G.P.O. Bag No 10. Port of Spain. However the Centre can be contacted by phone through the Trinidad Textile Mills, Arima, Tel 667–3211, who will relay messages, such as confirmation on cancellation of bookings, at the earliest opportunity.