



Book Review

Birds and mammals of the Galapagos

By D. M. Brinkhuizen and J. Nilsson

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Dušan Brinkhuizen graduated from the University of Groningen in the Netherlands with a M.Sc. in avian research. He resides in Ecuador. He is a founding member of the Comité Ecuatoriano de Registros Ornitológicos (CERO), Ecuador's rare bird committee. Jonas Nilsson began as a birdwatcher in Sweden at the age of 8, he has resided in Ecuador since 1963. He co-authored *Birds of Ecuador/Aves de Ecuador* (Krabbe and Nilsson 2003), a DVD-ROM of Ecuadorian bird sounds. Both authors are familiar with Ecuadorian and Galapagan fauna.

This book is a comprehensive field guide to the birds and mammals of the Galapagos. It has the unusual aim of trying to cover birds and mammals. This aim is somewhat more achievable given there are only 41 mammal species present on the islands: six endemic. However, 27 of these are cetaceans and another five are seals. The terrestrial mammals are bats, rats and mice. Dogs and cats were ignored. Unsurprisingly birds make up most of this guide with 170 species presented.

Like other guides in the Lynx series its systematics and taxonomy, colour illustrations and accompanying text are taken from the *HBW and BirdLife international: illustrated checklist of the birds of the world* (del Hoyo and Collar 2014, 2016) and the *Illustrated checklist of the mammals of the world* (Burgin *et al.* 2020). All have been updated as required. Some common introduced species have been omitted whereas 19 potential and hypothetical birds, unconfirmed by the authors, yet identified by other sources, have been included. QR codes are given for all avian species in this guide, which provide complimentary access to online resources at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Beyond the species accounts that make up the bulk of the book the guide is structured into predictable sections: a contents, introduction, a map numbering the main features and the islands of the archipelago, a key to the colour-coded species maps and three indexes: birds and mammals

giving English and scientific names, and finally a quick index giving general group names, e.g. finches and rodents.

The audience addressed by this book is surely the tourists given the guide is in English. The short Spanish indexes may encourage some locals to use it. More broadly it may have another audience in libraries around the world as a quick reference source. The strength of this guide lies in its colour illustrations, which when necessary, depict standing and flying attitudes and particular subspecies. Alas, this is not the same for the cetaceans. The whole animal is drawn, which is necessary, but I would have also liked to have seen those parts of the cetaceans that would typically be visible above the surface of the water.

The text for the species accounts works well with the illustrations and this is where the cetacean section is somewhat saved. Useful information is given on finding and describing the morphs and subspecies of the Galapagos. Beyond the species accounts there is a thoughtful introduction that initially gives a history of the archipelago (including the *HMS Beagle* and a young naturalist – Charles Darwin). The introduction also gives a rather interesting geological history that I found useful in understanding the non-human history of the island chain. It spends more than enough time on discussing birding hotspots on the various islands and then explains what you need to understand about the format of the species accounts. Since I have no plans (at this time) to go to the Galapagos, I found the introduction an interesting read.

It is hard to see this guide as fulfilling professional functions. Nevertheless, I would carry it into the field if I was working there because it is authoritative and the most recent work, of which there are many. The text is organised well and explains all I need to know about the different morphs and tells me what subspecies I am looking at. The colour coded maps facilitate quick understanding about

which islands or up what volcano I might find the bird I am looking for.

In judging the level of referencing it must be remembered that all that is in the book has come from the huge effort put into the birds and mammals of the world by Lynx; yet still there are five pages of references. The style of writing is clear and concise. I'm sure it has been revised many times by the editors of the series and the authors of this book. I have no criticisms. The QR codes situated at each species give further and significant access to the Cornell Lab, which must be very useful in the field if you need a field reference source.

The supplementary material is excellent. The vinyl cover will suit field-work (it would encourage me to stand my coffee cup on it) and the inside cover provides a quick and simple map of the islands and their volcanoes that may prove useful, although the species accounts are the best source for precise maps. I assume the QR codes are supplementary and as such they add great value with their source material being complimentary.

Overall this book gets the thumbs up despite including mammals and birds in the one place. Actually, a quick flick through the literature highlights a history of this approach

with Galapagan guide books. Its introduction is an interesting read and the species accounts are first rate. I am sure it will be a useful addition to many libraries and to the back-packs of tourists and researchers alike.

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