Field Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago (2007), by Martyn Kenefick, Robin Restall, and Floyd Hayes. Christopher Helm and Yale University Press. 107 color plates, maps, site guide, checklist, species review list, and index. 256 pages. $40 (paperback).

Birds of the Dominican Republic and Haiti (2006), by Steve Latta, Christopher Rimmer, Allan Keith, James Wiley, Herbert Raffaele, Kent McFarland, and Eladio Fernandez. Princeton University Press. 57 color plates by Barry Kent Mackay, Tracy Pederson, Kristin Williams, and others; maps, site guide, checklist, and index. 360 pages. $35 (paperback), $75 (clothbound).

The strategy of breaking out country- or region-specific field guides from larger, more area-comprehensive field guides has come of age. It is a sensible and highly practical idea. It provides birders with high-quality, smaller, lighter books containing information specific to the areas being studied. Moreover, books covering narrower geographic regions can be updated more often and more easily than can books covering larger areas. Reviewed here are two such break-out field guides, both of which cover islands in the Caribbean.

In the 140-year history of bird study in the two-island republic of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T), the new Kenefick-Restall-Hayes (KRH) field guide is a needed and important contribution, and a book well worth owning. It is complete in coverage while being neither overwhelming nor intimidating.

The first real field guide to the birds of T&T was G. A. C. Herklots' 1961 Birds of Trinidad and Tobago. Since then a new or revised field guide to the birds of T&T has appeared on average each decade: Richard ffrench's Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago in 1980, a significantly updated version of ffrench's guide in 1991, and now the new KRH guide. Each has improved significantly upon its immediate predecessor, with ffrench (1980) having made the most significant leap forward in both quality and coverage. For nearly 30 years, the ffrench guide has been the standard work carried afield by birders visiting this twin-island paradise. Indeed, many consider Richard ffrench to be the father of T&T ornithology. Appropriately, the KRH guide is dedicated to Richard ffrench.

The basis of the present work is the monumental 2006 two-volume Birds of Northern South America: An Identification Guide (BNSA), by Robin Restall and coauthors. From the 2,200+ species cov-
ered in that guide, the present authors selected all species documented from T&T, modified the descriptions so that they applied to the subspecies or races found on T&T (where known), and then wrote a section for each species detailing its status in T&T. Hayes began work on an early version of the book in 2000. It was formally commissioned by Christopher Helm in 2006 and appeared two years later, the actual preparation taking less than two years.

The dynamic nature of ornithological nomenclature, compounded by differing spellings between British and American English, produces problems in KRH. In some cases, both the American and British common names are provided: *Riparia riparia* is listed as “Bank Swallow (Sand Martin),” and *Pluvialis squatarola* is given as “Black-bellied (Grey) Plover.” This parenthetical technique is excellent for reducing potential confusion. I believe that the use of “grey” for birds that regularly occur in the eastern hemisphere (Grey Plover, Grey Heron) is perfectly acceptable, although such use results in inconsistencies when the spelling “gray” is used for western hemisphere species whose names contain that word. However, I am opposed to KRH’s policy of changing the formerly designated English name of a western hemisphere species such as Gray-headed Kite to Grey-headed Kite for the sake of consistency. The same holds true for Tricolored (not Tricoloured) Heron. I believe that the current spellings of AOU-approved names should be used for western hemisphere species.

Other nomenclatural problems are more serious. In *BNSA* Restall writes, “Our ‘recognition’ of any taxon is absolutely not an authoritative, formal treatment with scientific credentials. The last thing we would wish is to be accused of having exhibited the ‘taxonomy by field guide’ syndrome. The species limits presented here are simply what we have accepted, for our purposes of identifying taxa, in as unequivocal a way as possible.” One of the publisher’s “rules” in producing the field guide spinoffs was that they follow BNSA taxonomy and nomenclature, thus allowing perfect referencing back to the parent work. Unfortunately, KRH contains no mention of these positions but rather states, “We have adopted the official English and scientific names used by the American Ornithologists’ Union’s (AOU) South American Checklist Committee (SACC), using British spellings.”

That clearly is not the case. The actual usage is based on the International Ornithological Congress’ endorsed list of recommended English names, which the AOU voted not to adopt. I see the authors’ decision as a most unfortunate end-run around the AOU Check-list committee, which exists in part to provide standardization of names of western hemisphere species. KRH drops hyphens from group names (whistling-ducks, tiger-herons, and about 15 other groups) and borrows from the Northern South America guide English names not formally accepted by the AOU committee (for example, Grey-lined Hawk, Northern Crested Caracara, Amazonian Violaceous Trogon, Amazonian Whitetailed Trogon, Southern House Wren, Crowned Ant Tanager, Masked Cardinal, and Highland Hepatic Tanager). Astoundingly, neither the English nor the scientific name of one species included in KRH—Ring-necked Seedeater (*Sporophila insularis*)—appears anywhere in the AOU’s South American checklist. Restall believes that it is a race of Gray Seedeater (*Sporophila intermedia*) deserving elevation to species rank, but the SACC rejected the proposal.

Nomenclatural matters aside, KRH provides superb species coverage, illustrating and describing all 467 species documented through mid-2007, including such one-time wonders as Orange-fronted Yellow-Finch and Scaled...
Dove, both seen only in 1926. There are illustrations of many species, especially shorebirds, that have never before been depicted in a field guide to the birds of T&T. Moreover, there is not only the usual depiction of an alternate-plumage adult male with accompanying female, but also illustrations of immature males and females of many species. As many as six images are included for species in some groups, such as warblers. These illustrations will be useful to birders visiting T&T during the boreal autumn and winter months, when flocks of passage or wintering migrants often include more subadults than adults.

The quality of the artwork ranges from excellent (passerines) to average (shorebirds). A few species are depicted incorrectly, such as Western Reef-Heron shown with a strongly decurved bill and Black-necked Stilt with unnatural proportions. Many shorebirds are depicted and described only in juvenile and basic plumages, even though during springtime they appear in T&T in alternate plumage. The layout of species on some of the plates is awkward—large areas of white space with small illustrations. For example, on the “Oilbird, Potoo, and Nightjar” plate, the Oilbird image is large (3.5 inches), whereas that of the White-tailed Nightjar pair barely spans 1.5 inches, despite large areas of available white space. This problem is inherent in field guides derived from comprehensive works in which all individuals in a species group are illustrated at the same scale. When images from such groups are extracted for use in a spinoff publication and grouped with images from unrelated groups, the scales may vary. Enlarging an image from the source publication to more than 120% is impossible without severely degrading it. The alternative is to have the image repainted at a different scale.

When puzzled in the field, most birders will first study the illustrations in the field guide, and then will turn to “Similar Species,” a feature lacking in the French guide. KRH provide excellent coverage of every difficult species through the use of Peterson-system lines on the illustrations and by the comprehensive nature of its “Similar Species” descriptions. This feature will be of great value to birders trying to distinguish among tricky groups such as small flycatchers and female hummingbirds.

I have saved what I consider to be the best for last. The “Status” section of each species description provides a critically important resource for the visiting birder. It provides not only a general sense of how frequently a particular species might be expected to be seen, and where, but also provides, for rarer species, specific information such as “six sightings in the last 12 years,” “two sightings on Trinidad, the most recent at Waller Field in 1943,” and “no acceptable records from Tobago for at least 100 years.” Armed with this resource, visiting birders will be prompted to take a second look at their purported Orange-breasted Falcons, resolving them into the Bat Falcons they really are.

Having recently led my 56th birding tour to Trinidad and Tobago, during which the participants and I used KRH in the field for the first time, I can attest to its immense usefulness in the field. Those of us who have used the French guide for years have, for reasons of weight and convenience, removed the plates and had them bound separately for field use. KRH obviated that dramatic strategy. The modest size of KRH accelerates the speed with which one can locate desired species, and the vastly increased number of illustrations compared with the French guide affords users a higher likelihood of finding a match quickly and identifying a bird correctly.

I like the French guide. It contains a vast amount of information, and I will
continue to refer to it. But for more than 30 years, I have longed for a good Peterson-like field guide to the birds of T&T. Although I already find myself longing for a second edition of KRH with all of the wrinkles ironed out, I believe that my desire has been met. If you plan to bird in T&T, you will want to own this book.

Just as KRH was derived in large part from a previously existing field guide, the new *Birds of the Dominican Republic and Haiti* is a spinoff of the far more comprehensive 2003 *Birds of the West Indies* by Herbert Raffaele and coauthors.

The first field guide to include the birds of Hispaniola was James Bond's pocket-sized 1936 *Birds of the West Indies*. Bond published revised editions in 1971, 1974, 1979, 1983, and 1985. In 1995 the 1985 (sixth) edition of Bond was renamed *Birds of the Caribbean* and republished as part of the Peterson Field Guides series; no significant changes were made to the text or illustrations. Bond's book encompassed the Caribbean from the Bahamas east to Barbados, south to Grenada, west to Swan Island (a Honduran holding), and north to Cuba.


In 1998 Raffaele and coauthors published a new field guide to the Caribbean, also entitled *Birds of the West Indies*. Each of the 564 species accounts included a fairly comprehensive description of morphology, local names, status, range, habitat, nesting, and...
voice, as well as a range map for many species. This is the field guide on which the present work by Latta and coauthors on the birds of Hispaniola is based. Latta and his collaborators are all experts in Caribbean avifauna. They have created what clearly is the most comprehensive, accurate, and up-to-date book yet published on the birds of Hispaniola. Aside from a few technical improvements and corrections that could be made in a second edition, it would be difficult to imagine a finer work on this subject. In addition to enabling birders to identify quickly and accurately the birds on Hispaniola, the book’s availability in English, Spanish, and French will encourage ecotourism and stimulate local interest in conserving the island’s critically endangered avifauna and habitats.

Included are acknowledgments, an introduction, physical and elevational maps of Hispaniola, a guide layout, color plates with concise text on the facing page, and accurate and up-to-date accounts of the 306 species known to have occurred on the island (including the 31 endemics). Other features include a checklist of birds of Hispaniola, (including recent additions), references, indexes of local common names (Spanish for the Dominican Republic, Creole and French for Haiti) and English and scientific names, and descriptions of Hispaniolan topography and habitats, topographic features, endemic species, avian conservation on Hispaniola, national protected areas in both countries, threatened and endangered species, ornithological history, parts of a bird, and birding on Hispaniola.

The species accounts are well written and, in some cases, remarkably detailed. They should allow birders to quickly identify most if not all species. The accounts include range maps and information on key field marks, similar species, voice, habitats, geographic distribution, status, nesting, range, and local names—in both the Dominican Republic and Haiti. I found the “Comments” section to be particularly interesting, as it includes observations regarding preferred food, feeding and other behaviors, migration, times of day and locations where a species is most often observed, and taxonomic status.

Regarding illustrations, I would go so far as to say that the renditions in this guide are superb. The layout is generous, providing adequate space between species pairs. My only criticism is that the exceptionally attractive full-page portraits of Hispaniolan endemics by Barry Kent McKay, while strikingly rendered, may not be maximally useful for identification purposes, as the detailed, busy backgrounds might distract the birder seeking key features.

Rick Wright has pointed out on his website <tinyurl.com/4xhml> that the text occasionally emphasizes field marks not visible in the facing images and vice versa, that the scale on many plates is off, and that the bird topography sketch in the front of the book contains errors.

Regardless of these shortcomings, the tremendous amount of excellent, accurate material provided in this very readable book, much of it heretofore unpublished, renders it a publication needed by virtually every birder contemplating a visit to Hispaniola. The Dominican Republic and Haiti have now come of age in the birding world with their own field guide, their own eBird site <http://tiny.cc/WeYtm>, and a Caribbean Birds database site <http://tiny.cc/y9lgA>. As habitat loss and degradation increase across the island, and as both countries fail to enforce environmental laws, the avifauna of this unique island is confined to ever-shrinking ranges. As stated in the introduction, the authors intend this book “to inspire a new generation of birdwatchers, ornithologists, and conservationists...to increase public

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awareness throughout Hispaniola and internationally for the unique birds of the island, and underscore the need to protect these special species and their habitats for the enjoyment of future generations.” In every respect, this fine publication shows excellent potential for enabling its authors to achieve those goals.

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