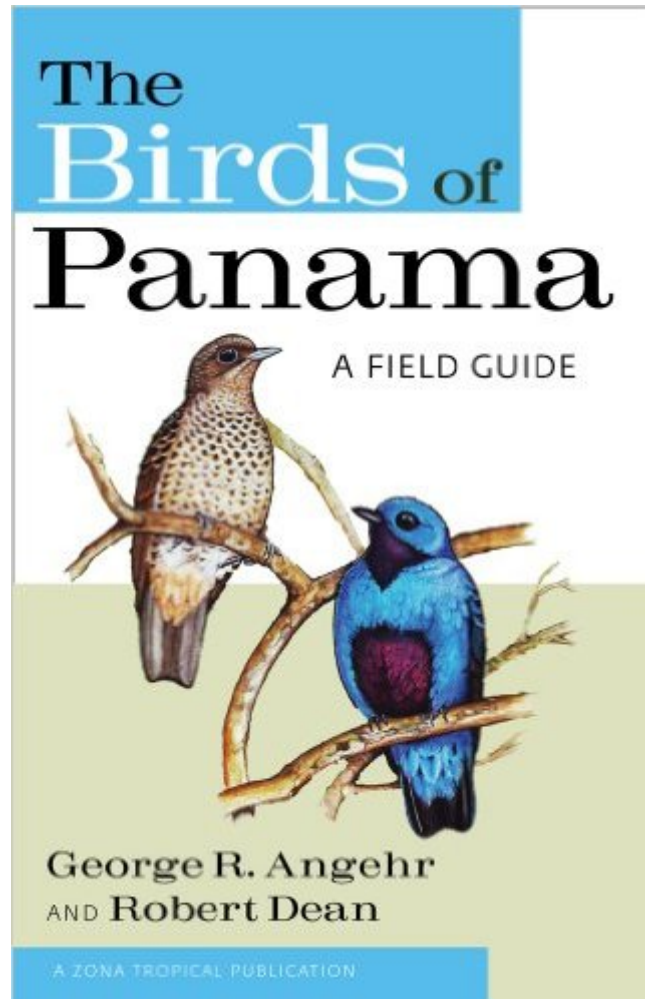


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The Birds Of Panama: A Field Guide (Zona Tropical Publications)



Synopsis

The isthmus of Panama, where North and South America meet, hosts more bird species than all of North America. More accessible than ever to birdwatchers and other ecotourists, the country has become a premier neotropical birding and nature tourism destination in recent years. The Birds of Panama will be an essential tool for the new generation of birders traveling in search of Panama's spectacular avifauna. This user-friendly, portable, and affordable identification guide features: a large color illustrations of more than 900 species; the first range maps published to show the distribution of Panama's birds; concise text that describes field marks for identification, as well as habitat, behavior, and vocalizations; range maps and species accounts face illustration pages for quick, easy reference; the inclusion of North American migrants and seabirds, as well as female and juvenile plumage variations; an up-to-date species list for the country that reflects recent additions, taxonomic splits, and other changes in classification. Panama's unique geography, small size, and varied habitats make it possible to see a vast diversity of birds within a short time. Its western and central areas harbor representatives of species found in Central America; species characteristic of South America may be found in the east. In the winter, birds from northern climes are commonly found in Panama as migrants. This is the one field guide the novice or experienced birder needs to identify birds in the field in Panama's diverse habitats.

Book Information

Series: Zona Tropical Publications

Paperback: 488 pages

Publisher: Comstock Publishing Associates; 1 edition (December 16, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0801476747

ISBN-13: 978-0801476747

Product Dimensions: 1.2 x 5.5 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.8 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars See all reviews (68 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #163,270 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #150 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Birds & Birdwatching > Field Guides #205 in Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Field Guides #970 in Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Fauna

Customer Reviews

This new field guide to the birds of Panama follows the earlier book for Costa Rica in its pattern. Thus, hopes were high from the beginning when this book was announced. And the authors and publishers certainly kept their standards. Mostly, the illustrations from that Costa Rica book have been retained where appropriate, but they have often been enlarged, reduced, sometimes mirrored or tilted to some extent. So finally, there is a fine birding guide for Panama, with range maps and today's customary set-up with the text, range maps and plates all on the same double-page spread. Compared to the Costa Rica volume, the printing of the plates is stronger. No more pale looking birds. Instead, there may be a few that got a bit too much ink. But overall the plates look more accurate. In particular, cotingas and honeycreepers now seem to have their correct colors. And it's only here that one can fully appreciate the very high quality of the artwork done by Robert Dean. I think his work is at least comparable to the one by Guy Tudor, long considered the one to compare all others with when it comes to neotropical field guide illustrations. For Central America, the Dean artwork as printed in the Panama book is definitely the new standard. There are many other improvements compared to the Costa Rica volume. Thus, range maps are now color coded, immediately providing information on the status of a species in Panama, like breeding or migrant bird. The most critical identification characters are highlighted in bold face, a feature already found in the Costa Rica book. However, this feature has been expanded. And the text gives much more info on how to distinguish similar species from each other.

THE BASICS: softcover, 2010, 456pp; illustrates with quality artwork all 950+ species found in Panama except for about 30 of the extreme vagrants; male and female plumages are shown plus relevant immatures; most of the birds are not shown in flight; paragraph on each bird focuses on description and identification notes plus similar species; brief notes on habitat and vocalizations given; a 5-color range map is given for each bird.

THE REVIEW: This book now easily moves into the top position as the best available book for birding in Panama. This is due to three things. One, this book illustrates nearly every bird known from the country. Two, a detailed range map accompanies each bird. And, three, this book is made in a true field guide format, being just a half-inch taller and quarter-inch wider than the National Geographic's popular field guide for North America. Except for about 30 species with only a couple of records in Panama, all 950+ species are illustrated with quality artwork. These illustrations are done by the same illustrator responsible for the sister guide to Costa Rica. As a plus, the color reproduction in this Panama guide is much better with richer, bolder hues. The tanagers, warblers, and honeycreepers now look brilliant. Nearly all the birds are of a good size in the plate to help show color and feather patterns for better identification. Only the

seed-finches seem to be on the small side, almost as if the plate was reduced just a tad too much before printing. My only critique about the layout of the drawings is relatively few birds are shown in flight. The few groups flying are the non-passerines such as the swifts, parrots, nighthawks, larids, raptors, and pelagics. For the passerines, the only group shown in flight is the swallows.

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