

HAWAIIAN BIRDS OF THE SEA: NĀ MANU KAI

Shallenberger, Robert J. 2010. Honolulu, Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press. 111 pp. 138 color photos, plus figures and tables. Paperback: ISBN 978-0-8248-3403-6, US \$21.99.

Although they are visiting the evolutionary cradle of a magnificent avifauna, it is ironic that most people who travel to Hawai'i will not see a native bird there. If they do, it will likely be a seabird. This compact but thorough compilation of photographs of the seabirds of Hawai'i with explanatory text can serve both as a coffee table book or a fairly portable resource to carry in the car or vessel as you tour the coastal and marine areas of all the main Hawai'ian Islands. It is not a field guide but will allow you view scenes from the private lives of seabirds that you may glimpse only at a distance around the archipelago.

The many well-exposed and nicely composed photographs illustrate both the lovely details of plumage and morphology of these tropical seabirds and convey images of place and context. Many of them also capture their behaviors, interactions and movement extremely well. The descriptions of each species are not encyclopedic but do capture some of the more interesting facets of each of these birds' ecology. They also include personally acquired insights about the experience an ornithologist might have studying them. The author can speak with authority on the subject because his extensive experience with Hawai'ian seabirds spans academic research, habitat and population management, and artistic pursuit during his substantial career.

Nice additions to the work are sections concerning conservation challenges, tips for finding seabirds around Hawai'i and advice for photographers.

A spirited debate erupted in my *ad hoc* focus group regarding which species' chick was cutest. The Bulwer's Petrel (*Bulweria bulwerii*) chick on page 31 prevailed but there was a following for the Brown Noddy (*Anous stolidus*) chick on page 77 with his oversized feet as well. The book maintained the interest of this group of non-experts in the field of marine ornithology with its varied and

attractive images. Those more experienced with seabirds in tropical colonies will enjoy the familiarity of the scenes and the skilled way behaviors are captured on film. The ratio of text to photos was just right for maintaining the attention of someone not yet addicted to seabirds, and the author provides references for the readers who want to take the next step.

This reviewer found a couple of minor discrepancies from currently accepted taxonomy. The book lists Nihoa Millerbird (*Acrocephalus familiaris*) as belonging to the family Muscicapidae, whereas the AOU checklist and Sibley and Monroe (1990) prefer to call it a member of the family Sylviidae. The change in the genus name for Sooty Terns (*Onychoprion fuscatus*) and Gray-backed Terns (*Onychoprion lunatus*) from *Sterna* to *Onychoprion*, as accepted by the American Ornithologists Union in their Forty-seventh Supplement to the Check-List of North American Birds in 2006, is not listed in this book and may cause some confusion to budding marine ornithologists.

This book has become a favorite of mine as a teaching aid if I am showing birds to people out in the field where we cannot get too close and as a gift to volunteers and houseguests as a memento of their trip to the tropical Pacific.

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REFERENCE

SIBLEY, C.G. & MONROE, B.L. JR. 1990. Distribution and Taxonomy of the Birds of the World. New Haven: Yale University Press.