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A BIRD-FINDING GUIDE TO MEXICO.

*By Steve N G Howell. Ithaca (New York): Comstock Publishing Associates (Cornell University Press). \$29.95 (paper). xviii + 365 p; ill.; index. ISBN: 0-8014-8581-9. 1999.*

Mexico has been the training camp for many neotropical ornithologists. The author had done a remarkable service to the ornithological and birding communities in producing first a guide to the birds of Mexico, and he continues to contribute now with the bird-finding guide. Howell clearly has an enormous store of field experience in the country, excellent identification abilities, and effective skills at

communicating his knowledge to a wide variety of readers.

A *Bird-Finding Guide to Mexico* is an excellent compendium of sites that birders and ornithologists can visit to see Mexican birds. The combined avifaunas of these sites sum to more than 950 species, which is almost 90% of the 1060 or so species known from the country. This diversity of sites, as well as the careful descriptions that accompany each, make this book quite useful in planning outings in Mexico.

The book is generally well presented and edited. For sites with which I am familiar, the descriptions are useful and clear, and should guide users to the interesting birds. On the negative side, Howell relies overmuch on common names (see in particular the new "splits" used), which leads to ambiguity. Howell also makes some cultural bumbles. "The word *mañana* might come to mind when you think of Mexico . . . a national trait" (p 15) is odd if one knows Mexico. And his *mirando a los pájaros* ("bird-watching," p 14) has a second meaning that could cause embarrassment. Regardless, Howell has presented a very useful guide to where to see Mexican birds, more than a significant contribution.

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