

BOOK REVIEWS

Bird Songs of Southeastern Arizona and Sonora, Mexico by Geoffrey A. Keller. 2001. Library of Natural Sounds, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Set of 2 compact disks; \$24.95. ISBN 0-938027-58-1.

This fine set of recordings appears to be part of a series from Cornell that, to date, has covered Alaska (1999), the Rocky Mountain states and provinces (1999; reviewed in *W. Birds* 31:64), and the lower Rio Grande valley and southwestern Texas (2000). The compilation reviewed here contains vocalizations from 151 "Arizona species" (those with "at least one confirmed breeding record in the state"—although, apparently, a nest with two eggs of the Rufous-capped Warbler [Rosenberg and Witzeman 1999. *W. Birds* 30:94–120] does not qualify) and a further 51 "Sonora species," including some that stray rarely to southeastern Arizona (e.g., the Plain-capped Starthroat and Yellow Grosbeak). As with other works in this series, the selection of species is somewhat eclectic with no stated reason for inclusion or omission. For example, included are the Sharp-shinned Hawk but not the Red-tailed, the Eastern Meadowlark but not the Western. Nonetheless, apparently all of the "southeastern Arizona specialties" are included, which may be the main focus for most potential buyers. Species are arranged in AOU (1998 checklist) sequence, but the 42nd checklist supplement (2000) was not followed, e.g., the Arizona Woodpecker (*P. arizonae*) remains as Strickland's Woodpecker (*P. stricklandi*). An accompanying booklet provides context for most vocalizations and also gives the location of each recording (at the state level only, see below). The booklet includes many written transcriptions and often articulates helpful pointers for distinguishing vocalizations of similar-sounding species. Regional or subspecific variation in song is mentioned for some taxa, e.g., the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (*E. t. extimus*) and Eastern Meadowlark (*S. m. liliana*), but not for others, e.g., the Northern Pygmy-Owl or White-breasted Nuthatch.

The recordings are, almost without exception, of superb quality which, ironically, makes some sound "unnatural," because ambient noise we usually hear in the field is lacking. Among many possibilities, one can make useful comparisons of the songs of the Bendire's, Curve-billed, Crissal, and Le Conte's thrashers, or of the calls of the Ladder-backed, Hairy, and Arizona/Strickland's woodpeckers. The three southwestern *Myiarchus* flycatchers are included, as is the Nutting's Flycatcher from Sonora, and other notable species included are the White-throated and Pine flycatchers and Black-capped Gnatcatcher. Other species are sometimes audible in the background but, although not identified, are unlikely to be confused with the featured species.

The following observations are intended as constructive comments to be considered for future editions and other works in this series and, I acknowledge, are for the most part niggling relative to the overall scope and quality of this undertaking. My main complaint is that the date and location are not provided for each cut, although, according to the booklet's introductory material, such information can be requested. Nonetheless, in an age when appreciation of geographic variation with respect to subspecies (or even local dialects) is growing, the addition of date and location data should be mandatory and, with forethought, would not take up much space in the booklet. Instead, locations are given only at the state or province level, and without date. More than one subspecies can breed in a state, and, however, and subspecies not breeding in a region can sing during migration. Related to this, 25% of the "Arizona" species were recorded outside that state, as were many additional cuts for other species. Consequently the title is somewhat misleading and might more accurately read "Songs and calls of birds that occur in southeastern Arizona...." Surely there are recordings from Arizona of the Common Raven or Brown Creeper? The flight call of the male Brown-headed Cowbird is renowned for its geographic variation (the cut included is from Oregon), and the vocalizations of Berylline Hummingbird (from Chiapas, southern Mexico) pertain to a very different subspecies and are unlikely to be of much help in Arizona.

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I recognize that the vocal repertoires of very few species are completely known, let alone represented by recordings. In particular, this might pertain to the Mexican species on these CDs—and can highlight where field work needs to be directed—but for other species I would hope that fuller ranges of sounds could be found, and of the relevant subspecies. For example, no drum is included for the Ladder-backed Woodpecker, and the *peek* call of the Hairy Woodpecker is from an Oregon subspecies. Some calls I hear commonly from several species are not included in the cuts, e.g., the *chup* call of a Hermit Thrush or the Berylline Hummingbird's diagnostic buzz call. Several vocalizations sound as if birds were agitated (perhaps by playback or near the nest?), e.g., the unusually persistent (and "atypical") Flame-colored Tanager calls. If birds were responding to playback this could be noted; the resulting vocalizations are still "natural" but may not be those heard under most field conditions.

The distinction between a "song" and a "call" is, of course, rather anthropomorphic and often somewhat subjective, but the Gray-collared Becard's so-called "song" sounds like an infrequently heard "agitation call," while the second cut is an attenuated version of this species' typical "territorial song." Users should also be aware that the booklet's text sometimes compares non-analogous vocalizations. This could lead to mistaken beliefs that some species' calls are quite different, e.g., the calls provided for Northern Cardinal (from Florida) and *Pyrrhuloxia*. Alternatively, the Eared Trogon's voice is reportedly "very different from that of the Elegant Trogon." True enough, but the relevant cuts compare Elegant Trogon "songs" with non-analogous "calls" of the Eared.

My final observation, having been involved in some of the in-progress review work, is that the completed CDs and booklet appear not to have been subjected to final review—an important step not to overlook. Thus, although I am credited with reviewing the Mexican species for authenticity I was surprised to see the inclusion of the Maroon-fronted Parrot (endemic to northeast Mexico!) under the Thick-billed Parrot (the Nuevo Leon cut). Also note the "Common Black Hawk" from "Costa Rica: Puntarenas," which, on geographic grounds, seems more likely to have been a Mangrove Black Hawk (split by the AOU if not by Middle American authorities, e.g., see Stiles and Skutch, 1989, *A Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica*). The booklet also could have benefited from a copy-editing check for grammar, but, all in all, my comments and complaints are minor set against the fine resource that Geoff Keller and Cornell have produced. Anyone interested in the songs and calls of North American and Mexican birds should own these CDs and, if possible, help fill in gaps to make future editions more comprehensive.

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