



*A Guide to the
Birds of Panama:
With Costa Rica,
Nicaragua, and
Honduras*

1976

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Robert S. Ridgely and
John A. Gwynne, Jr.

While serving as an army lieutenant in Panama in 1967, Robert Ridgely was fascinated by the sheer abundance and variety of bird species there, but he was also frus-

trated by the lack of any reference work with which to identify many of them. When he returned to his studies at Princeton University in 1969, he teamed up with fellow student and fledgling artist John Gwynne to tackle this problem. Over the next few years, during their undergraduate careers, Ridgely and Gwynne created the first comprehensive Neotropical field guide, aided in their research and fieldwork by funding from Robert MacArthur of the biology department and a National Science Foundation summer study program. The result was the first reference book that, with accurate illustrations and informative text, would *really* aid in the identification of birds in much of Central America.

Treating more than a thousand species, the majority of which were illustrated in color, the guide provided invaluable information on every facet of field identification and in turn fueled a burgeoning interest among American and European birders in the avifauna of this region. In 1989, the second English-language edition—and the first Spanish-language edition—further stimulated local and international interest. Today, Panama is in the vanguard of Central American countries committed to ecotourism, owing in no small part to this pioneering book.