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HAWAII'S ENVIRONMENT

Book on island fish unequaled

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There are books about fish in Hawai'i, but now there's the bible — John Randall's "Reef and Shore Fishes of the Hawaiian Islands."

It is scientifically up to date, reporting on the 612 species of fish from the entire Hawaiian Archipelago and Johnston Atoll, and waters to a depth of 650 feet — not just reef fish, not just the fish you'll catch trolling or bottomfishing, not just the common fish, but the whole shebang. Only offshore fish are missing.

"For Hawaiian fishes, nothing else comes close," said Waikiki Aquarium director Andrew Rossiter.

This impressive, authoritative book, published by the University of Hawai'i's Sea Grant program, comes at the princely price of \$125 for its 546 glossy pages.

Randall, the former director of Oceanic Institute and senior ichthyologist (fish scientist) at Bishop Museum, is uniquely qualified to do a book like this. He has been in the Pacific studying marine fish since the 1950s, when he sailed a ketch to Hawai'i to get his doctorate. He has described 628 species of fish not previously known to science.

"Reef and Shore Fishes" is a course in Hawaiian marine life, with chapters on history, how species got to the Islands, marine conservation, fish identification. The book is extensively illustrated with excellent photos, more than 900 of them in color.

Would you have guessed there are more than a dozen flounders known from Hawai'i, plus three species of sole? Or that they use their amazing camouflage not just to hide from predators, but — as predators themselves — to sneak up on prey?

There are 45 pages of eels alone, and nearly as many pages of wrasses. You'll learn that the colors of male and female parrotfish are often so different that you'd never guess they were the same species.

And then there are the gobies. They represent the largest family of marine fish, but there are only 34 species in Hawai'i. The reason: "The span of pelagic larval life is generally short. ... Therefore the larvae of relatively few gobies have made it across the vast stretch of open ocean that separates the Hawaiian Archipelago from the nearest shoal areas."

I was fascinated with infant fishes, a clan of tiny fish with transparent bodies that are sexually mature when they still look like larvae. They are related to gobies. There are just two species in Hawai'i, neither more than an inch long. They're attracted to light at night, which is the only way most folks would notice them.

If you're interested in marine fish, save up your money for this book, available soon.

If you have a question or concern about the Hawaiian environment, drop a note to Jan TenBruggencate at P.O. Box 524, Lihu'e, HI 96766 or jant@honoluluadvertiser.com. Or call him at (808) 245-3074.

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