

THE REAL JAMES BOND: A TRUE STORY OF IDENTITY THEFT, AVIAN INTRIGUE, AND IAN FLEMING—Jim Wright. 2020. Schiffer Publishing, Atglen, PA. 144 pp. ISBN 978-0-7643-5902-6. \$24.99.

This is a handsome and engaging book—quite befitting for a profile of the ornithologist James Bond, whose history and very identity is so tightly interwoven with the decorous spy of literary and screen fame, James Bond, 007.

Younger readers may not be familiar with the ornithologist Bond. Known to friends and family as Jim, but to the rest of us as James, Bond was the name most associated with the birds of the Caribbean throughout the 20th century. Beginning in 1927, Bond made innumerable expeditions for the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences to islands across the Caribbean and published on such topics as taxonomy, distribution, and origin of Caribbean birds. In 1936, Bond published the first true field guide to the birds of the region, *Birds of the West Indies*. Over the next six decades, he continued to update and revise at least eight new editions of this guide, becoming the preeminent source for Caribbean ornithology. It was not until Herb Raffaele and coauthors eclipsed Bond's guide in 1998 with their own, more complete and updated, *A Guide to the Birds of the West Indies*, that James Bond's association with Caribbean ornithology began to dim.

It was Bond's *Birds of the West Indies* that ultimately provided the link between the ornithologist and the spy of literary and screen fame. In 1952, when the British author Ian Fleming was residing at Goldeneye, his home in Jamaica, he began to pen the first of what became a series of novels featuring a dashing spy. History has it that Fleming, needing a name for his spy, cast his eyes on Bond's field guide sitting on his bookshelf, and promptly appropriated the author's name.

It was not until years later that the books and the films would make James Bond, 007, a household name, and the ornithologist, Jim Bond, would learn that his identity had been stolen. For a time, Bond's wife, Mary, herself a published writer, enjoyed the familial fame and publicized the association through her own books, including *How 007 Got His Name* (1966). By all accounts, Jim Bond was baffled and amused by his relationship with 007; however, contrary to Mary, he preferred to be left out of the

limelight. Bond only met Ian Fleming once, dropping in on him at Goldeneye in 1964. Fleming then admitted to the heist, inscribing a copy of his latest spy thriller, "To the real James Bond, from the thief of his identity, Ian Fleming."

While Jim Wright's book indeed highlights the relationship between the two Bonds, it is much more than a biography of the ornithologist, or the story of how his life work became overshadowed by a fictional character. In ten cleverly numbered chapters (001, 002, ...), we learn about the role of family wealth and passion in the building of museum collections, book collecting and the distinctions and desires of bibliophiles; the use of arsenic in preserving bird skins; the surprising link between bird watchers, ornithologists and international spies, and even speculation as to whether Jim Bond may have been a spy himself!

*The Real James Bond: A True Story of Identity Theft, Avian Intrigue, and Ian Fleming* is a quick and absorbing read that pleasantly leads the reader through a collection of themes almost as diverse as the Caribbean avifauna. Quite a treat! Furthermore, in an era when many books seem to be thrown together for quick and inexpensive sale, this is a well-researched, high-quality book printed on heavy paper and loaded with interesting photos reproduced in true colors. Bibliophiles will understand when I say this book just feels good to hold! I highly recommend this book to any Caribbean ornithologist who appreciates the history of bird study and bird conservation in the region, and especially to those who recognize the added color that diverse subjects and popular culture can add to ornithology and conservation.

## Literature Cited

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