

Birds Through an Opera Glass.*—This little volume of some 223 pages is made up of sixty chapters, each of which relates to a single bird. Most of the species are the more conspicuous or interesting of our northern birds, the author's observations having been made either at Northampton, Massachusetts, or Locust Grove, New York. Many of the chapters were published in the 'Audubon Magazine' for 1886. These have been revised and largely re-written; the others now appear for the first time. The work is illustrated by some good woodcuts taken from Baird, Brewer, and Ridgway's 'History of North American Birds.' There is a preliminary chapter entitled, 'Hints to Observers', which includes a few simple and excellent rules intended for beginners.

Miss Merriam belongs to that class of observers and writers of which, so far as North America is concerned, Thoreau may be said to have been the originator, and Burroughs, Torrey, Maurice Thompson, and others, the disciples and followers. As with all of these, her field work seems to have been instigated and directed by an innate love of the woods and fields, and an interest, at once strong and affectionate, in their feathered inhabitants. Her sole weapon has been not a gun, but an opera glass; her object not the acquisition of specimens, but the study of the manners and habits of the living birds. Evidently she is particularly interested in their songs and call notes, for these receive marked attention in all her biographies. Her descriptions of them are perhaps as successful as those of most writers in this field, but it may well be doubted if it is really worth while to attempt anything definite of this kind. Either different ears hear differently, or, as is more probable, most bird notes are impossible of adequate rendering into words.

As an observer, Miss Merriam is unmistakably keen, discriminating, and accurate; as a writer, always simple and true, at times highly vigorous and original. Her attractive little book may be cordially recommended to all who wish to study our familiar birds, either with or without an opera glass.—W. B.

Stone's Catalogue of the Muscicapidæ in the Collection of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences.†—Mr. Witmer Stone, a promising young ornithologist of Philadelphia, already well known to the readers of 'The Auk,' presents us in the present paper a catalogue of the Muscicapidæ, or Old World Flycatchers, contained in the Museum of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. This collection, as is well known, is rich in types, containing as it does Gould's types of his 'Birds of Australia,' and most of the types of the species described by Cassin, and much historic material from the collections of Gen. Massena, the Duke of Rivoli, Prince d'Esling, and Du Chaillu. Since the death of the late

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† Catalogue of the Muscicapidæ in the Collection of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences. By Witmer Stone. Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila., 1889, pp. 146-154.

John Cassin, in 1869, the Academy's collection of birds, though so important and valuable, has had no proper curator, and has consequently suffered from neglect and disuse. We are, however, pleased to learn that it has escaped serious harm from insect pests, and is now in the hands of an energetic and efficient worker who, as an assistant curator of the Museum, is especially in charge of the birds, and is not only bringing them into an orderly condition, but making known the contents of the collection.

The 'Catalogue' under notice enumerates 156 species, or about three eighths of all the known species of the family Muscicapidæ, represented by 502 specimens, including the types of 34 species. The specimens are not formally enumerated, generally merely the localities being given from which the species are represented, with here and there a few critical remarks respecting the status of certain forms, and on interesting phase of plumage. In the main the nomenclature and arrangement of Mr. Sharpe's 'Catalogue' of the family (Bds. Brit. Mus., Vol. IV) is followed. In a former paper* Mr. Stone has given his reasons for believing the *Pratincola salax* Verr. = *P. sybilla* (Linn.). We are pleased to learn that similar 'Catalogues' of other families may be soon expected.—J. A. A.

Bergtold's List of the Birds of Buffalo and Vicinity. † — This briefly annotated list numbers 237 species and subspecies. Says the author: "The present purpose is to record the name of every bird known to occur or to have occurred in this locality. . . . The names of no species have been admitted when the least shade of doubt existed as to the authenticity of their occurrence. In order to be authentic a bird must either have been taken and identified by competent persons, or if seen alive and not taken, must have been of such easy recognition as to exclude the slightest uncertainty regarding its determination." Acknowledgments of indebtedness are made in the preface to various observers, and in cases where species are admitted on the authority of others, the name of the authority is given as a part of the record. The arrangement and nomenclature is that of the A. O. U. Check-List.

Among the records of special interest is the capture of the Skua (*Megalestris skua*) on Niagara River in the spring of 1886, by Prof. Chas. Linden, and a pair of Evening Grosbeaks (*Coccothraustes vespertina*) taken in 1886, by B. W. Fenton. The Carolina Chickadee (*Parus carolinensis*) is given as a straggler. The Yellow-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax violaceus*) and Wilson's Plover (*Ægialitis wilsonia*) are recorded as migrants, on the authority of Prof. Linden. It would be of interest to know whether specimens of these two species taken near Buffalo are

* On *Pratincola salax* Verr. and Allied Species. Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila., 1889, pp. 78-80.

† A List of the Birds of Buffalo and Vicinity. By W. H. Bergtold, M. D., President of the Buffalo Naturalists' Field Club, etc. Reprinted from the Bulletin of the Buffalo Naturalists' Field Club of the Buffalo Society of Natural Science. Buffalo, N. Y., 1889, 8vo. pp. 21.