

essary during the ten years intervening between the preparation of the two editions, and the proper interpolation of the additions in the seven Supplements published 1889-1895. Besides this the statements of 'habitat' or 'geographic distribution,' have been carefully revised, a large proportion of them having been rewritten, in consequence of recent increase in our knowledge of the subject. An effort has also been made, where practicable, to distinguish the breeding range from the general range. The Check-List is thus once more brought fairly abreast of the present knowledge of the subject.

The additions during the last ten years number about 36 species and 90 subspecies. Out of nearly one thousand specific and subspecific names in the first edition not more than 25 have been changed; 8 generic names have been changed, of which 3 were found to be preoccupied, the other generic changes being due to taxonomic revisions; a few groups ranked in the first edition as subgenera have also since been raised to full generic rank. Thus, all things considered, the nomenclature of the first A. O. U. Check-List has proved as stable as its best friends could have expected. That further additions will be made to the list, as time goes on, is evident, and probably a third edition may be found desirable by the end of the next decade.—J. A. A.

Hudson's British Birds.¹—It is not to be supposed that a new volume on British birds implies a corresponding increase in our knowledge concerning them. Consequently we look for this book's *raison d'être* in the method with which the subject is treated. In matters of detail, it resembles more or less closely other manuals of similar scope, but the author's facile pen and the artist's skilful brush seconded by a generous publisher, have resulted in the production of a work which is deserving a most cordial welcome.

Mr. Hudson is not bound by tradition. He insists that a book on British birds should be strictly such, and he rightly rebels against the custom of allotting as much space to a species which has occurred but once or twice, as to the commonest permanent residents. Of the 376 species enumerated by the B. O. U. list he considers that not more than 210 can rightly be called British birds. The 160 odd accidental or occasional visitants are therefore grouped at the end of their respective families with a brief statement of their true habitat and manner of occurrence in Great Britain. This very commendable proceeding serves a

¹ British Birds | By | W. H. Hudson, C. M. Z. S. | With a Chapter on Structure and Classification | By Frank E. Beddard, F. R. S. | With 8 Coloured Plates from Original Drawings by A. Thorburn | and 8 Plates and 100 Figures in black and white from Original Drawings by G. E. Lodge | and 3 Illustrations from Photographs from Nature by R. B. Lodge | London | Longmans, Green, and Co. | and New York | 1895 | All rights reserved | Sm. 8vo, pp. xxii + 363. \$3.50.

double purpose. It does not give these stragglers undue prominence and it permits a much fuller treatment of the native species. Probably no book on British birds which is at all comparable with this in size, contains such extended accounts of their life histories.

In writing these biographies Mr. Hudson aims to give us the characteristic habits of the species rather than a too finely spun sketch, which, however well it depicted his own experience, might be quite at variance with the results obtained by other observers. "Birds are not automata, but intelligent beings," and resemble each other in habits only up to a certain point. It is to this point that Mr. Hudson's biographies bring us. We wish, however, he had included a paragraph on distribution, a matter to which he gives little attention locally, while the fact that the birds he writes of are found outside of Great Britain is rarely stated.

The value of this book is greatly enhanced by its illustrations. These are not only of rare beauty but they are evidently drawn by artists who are familiar with their subjects in life. Furthermore, they possess the latterly unique merit of being drawn expressly for the work in which they appear.

Mr. Beddard's prefatory chapter of thirty-eight pages on 'Anatomy and Classification' treats briefly, but in a manner likely to interest beginners, of the more characteristic avian organs. He concludes with a classification of the orders of birds, in which, among living forms, he begins with the *Ratitæ* and ends with *Psittaci*! Not that he has "a deep-seated and mysterious reason" for placing the "Parrots at the end of the *Aves Carinatae*," but simply through "sheer inability to place them anywhere in particular." This is evidently not an application of the decidedly original principle expressed on the preceding page, to the effect that, "the more perfect our scheme of classification, the greater our ignorance of the group classified."—F. M. C.

Bendire on the Cowbirds.¹—The parasitic habits of the Cowbirds render them a peculiarly interesting group, consisting of about twelve species, commonly referred to the two genera *Molothrus* (8 species) and *Calliothrus* (4 species). They are of course all confined to the two American continents, ranging from southern Canada to Paraguay. The species of *Calliothrus* are essentially tropical, ranging from Mexico through Central America to northern South America, one only, *C. robustus*, barely reaching southern Texas; while *Molothrus* is represented from the colder temperate parts of North America southward across the tropics to temperate South America. Very little is known of the habits of many of the species, only our own *Molothrus ater*, and the *M. bonariensis*, *M.*

¹The Cowbirds. By Major Charles Bendire, Honorary Curator of the Oölogical Collections, U. S. National Museum. Reprinted from the Report of the U. S. National Museum for 1893 (1895), pp. 587-624. pll. 1-3.