

peckers, and numerous other species whose economic status has been considered in the various 'Bulletins' and other publications of the Division of Ornithology and Mammalogy. Throughout the treatise the utility and economic status of the species is kept well in view, and the work therefore cannot be otherwise than educational in the best sense to the people of Indiana, whether as an aid in determining the species or as a guide to their proper treatment. It is a hopeful omen of better times, not only for the birds but for the people, that a State legislature proves itself sufficiently far-sighted to place within reach of the public such an admirable aid to a better knowledge of their natural surroundings.

As is usual in recent works on North American birds, strict adherence is given to the nomenclature of the A. O. U. Check-List. — J. A. A.

Blanford's 'Birds of British India.'¹—The first two volumes of the 'Birds of British India,' by Mr. E. W. Oates, were published in 1883, and volume III, by Dr. Blanford, in 1895; the present and fourth volume, also by Dr. Blanford, completes the series, which furnishes us with a most convenient and useful work on the Birds of British India, including Ceylon and Burma. "The number of Indian birds regarded as distinct species in the present work," says Dr. Blanford, "amounts to 1626." "The precise number," he adds "is naturally dependent on a personal factor, some writers being more liberal than others in admitting the claims to specific rank of races which are distinguished by small differences of plumage or measurement, or which are connected by intervening links with the typical form. Such races or subspecies, as they are called, have not, as a rule, been separately numbered and described in the present work, but they have received due notice and their characters have been explained." In other words, subspecies are not formally recognized, and form no part of the 1626 species. And, as said by a friendly reviewer of the work, "modern vagaries in nomenclature are not usually countenanced." Linnaeus is taken at 1766, and in other respects the nomenclature is in accord with what this implies.

The present volume treats of 347 species (exclusive of 10 added in the appendix to those enumerated in the first three volumes), beginning with the Columbæ and ending with the Pygopodes. About a page is devoted, in the average, to each species, besides the space given to the higher groups; this suffices to give the principal bibliographical references, an

¹The Fauna of British India, | including | Ceylon and Burma, | Published under the authority of the Secretary of | State for India in Council | Edited by W. T. Blanford, | — | Birds,—Vol. IV. | By | W. T. Blanford, F. R. S. | — | London: | Taylor and Francis, Red Lion Court, Fleet Street, | Calcutta: | Thacker, Spink & Co. | Bombay: | Thacker & Co., Limited | Berlin: | R. Friedländer & Sohn, 11 Carlstrasse, | 1898.—8vo, pp. xxi + 500, and 127 figures in text.

adequate description, and a paragraph each on 'Distribution' and 'Habits, etc.' The work is thus in the nature of a 'hand-book,' and will prove invaluable to all interested in Indian ornithology. — J. A. A.

Gurney's 'The Economy of the Cuckoo.'¹— Although so much has been written about the Common Cuckoo of Europe (*Cuculus canorus*), there are many points in its history, according to Mr. Gurney, still not well known. "Cuckoo's eggs," he says, "and all that appertains to them, is an inexhaustible subject when naturalists meet in conclave, and it is one which has a fascination for every oölogist . . . Cuckoo's eggs often, but by no means always in this country, whatever may be the case on the Continent, bear a curiously protective resemblance to the eggs of the foster-bird. To the late August Baldamus belongs the credit of this discovery, though Professor Newton has pointed out that in the second century Ælian had almost arrived at the truth . . . What is argued, by Baldamus and others since him, is that each individual Cuckoo is parasitic to one or two species, and has power to lay only one type of egg . . . Further it seems reasonable to suppose that any Cuckoo will by preference lay in the nest of the species which brought her up. That each individual Cuckoo lays its own type of egg, season after season, and that in nineteen cases out of twenty it lays that egg on the ground, . . . and taking it in its mouth flies or crawls to a nest already known, is established, and hardly requires any further proof . . . That Cuckoos habitually carry away one or more of the fosterer's eggs is now beyond dispute, and they might be expected to continue watching a fosterer's nest which they had not yet robbed, in the hope of doing so." This is supposed to be their purpose when seen hanging about in the immediate vicinity of a nest they have chosen for the deposition of one of their own eggs, rather than solicitude for its safety.

Much proof is also advanced as to the egg-eating propensity of the Cuckoo, the mashed shells of at least seven eggs having been taken from the stomach of a single Cuckoo. The old Cuckoos are also accused of removing nestlings from the nest of the fosterer, and the charge is sustained by much circumstantial and some very satisfactory evidence, the purpose being apparently to secure more abundant nourishment for their own young.

It is a disputed question whether or not Cuckoos ever feed their own young. Mr. Gurney believes "that this departure from the Cuckoo's ordinary habits does take place under very rare circumstances," and that further verification of it will be forthcoming. Mr. Gurney also refers to the "supposed pouch" or "throat pocket" of the Cuckoo, for carrying

¹ The Economy of the Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*). By J. H. Gurney, F. Z. S. Trans. of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society, Vol. VI, pp. 365-384.