

It is in manual form and covers all of the birds found in the Palearctic region of Europe and Africa. There are brief diagnoses of the orders and families which present their most obvious characters, and descriptions with measurements of all of the species and subspecies which enter the region covered, and a detailed statement of distribution, including both the breeding and winter ranges in the case of migrants. The systematic arrangement is that of Hartert's 'Die Vögel der palaarktischen Fauna,' but the nomenclature does not always follow that work. An important feature is the addition to the English name of the French, German, Italian and Swedish vernaculars where they exist. A good index aids one in finding any desired species.

This work is of course not a book for beginners and has no artificial keys for determining species but any one familiar with the birds of Great Britain, or of the United States, and accustomed to handle any of the standard manuals will find it just what he needs when travelling in Europe or in the northern countries of Africa.

There are some points in the nomenclatural treatment which will not suit everyone especially the plan of printing the first of a series of trinomial forms—races of the same species—in heavy type and the rest in smaller size. It naturally gives the impression that their rank is different whereas they are all equal. This is especially confusing to the uninitiated in cases like that of the Canary where *Serinus canarius serinus* stands at the head of the forms, in heavy type, while *S. c. canarius* follows below, in lower case. We also object to the habit so frequent on the part of British authors of coining special names for North American birds, which are never used in America, as for example, "Water Pipit" for our *Anthus*, and "American Stint" for our Least Sandpiper, but these are really minor matters.

The late Col. Ramsay had conceived this work sometime before his death and had completed the greater part of it, but realizing that he would be unable to publish it himself he entrusted it to his friend Dr. W. Eagle Clarke to do with as he thought best. To Dr. Clarke and to Rear Admiral Stenhouse we are indebted for its prompt appearance and to the former also for a brief biographical sketch and portrait of the author, who will be remembered as president of the British Ornithologists' Union and nephew of the Marquis of Tweeddale.—W. S.

Fitzsimmons' 'Birds of South Africa.'—The two attractively gotten-up volumes¹ of this work form part of the author's 'Natural History of South Africa.' The title is unfortunately misleading as the birds are considered almost exclusively from an economic standpoint and he who

¹ The Natural History of South Africa. By F. W. Fitzsimmons. F. Z. S., F. R. M. S., etc. Director, Port Elizabeth Museum. Birds, in two volumes. With 10 coloured plates and numerous illustrations from photographs, etc. Longmans, Green and Co. 39 Paternoster Row, London, E. C. 4. New York, Toronto, Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. 1923. Vol. I, pp. i-xvi, + 1-288. Vol. II, pp. i-vii, + 1-323. Price \$4.00 net each volume.

may secure the book for the purpose of identifying South African birds or of learning something of the general character of the avifauna will be disappointed.

As an economic work however it is excellent and Volume I sets forth the whole problem of bird conservation, the birds' part in suppressing insect life and the food habits of the more familiar species, in a most convincing way. To those who have interested themselves in bird conservation in America this work will be read with the greatest interest. Although the environment is totally different and also the make-up of the avifauna, the problems are almost identical, and the same methods will prove effective in meeting them, as have been employed here.

The native kafir boys who destroy so many birds for food have their counterpart in our southern negroes and the immigrant Italians in the north, while the farmers who destroy bird "pests" before they learn the economics of the problem, are the same in both countries. In this connection it is interesting to find many quotations from the work of the U. S. Biological Survey and the publications of Mr. Edward Howe Forbush, as well as from American poets.

South Africa would seem to be far behind us in educational work in behalf of conservation and Mr. Fitzsimmons' book will do a world of good if only its contents can be spread broadcast through the public press, for it seems to be too expensive a work to reach the people who should benefit from it.

Volume II has rather a peculiar make-up. Instead of a systematic treatment of the entire avifauna of South Africa we have three separate lists. First; a 'List of South African Birds and their Diet,' in which the units considered are sometimes species, and sometimes genera or even higher groups. Then comes 'Descriptions, distribution and habits of the birds figured in Vols. I and II.' The information here given is brief and of the nature desired in a popular hand book but only a comparatively small number of the species are considered—about 150. Finally comes a nominal list of 926 species and subspecies with technical and common names on different lines and the former in heavy type, so that it covers many pages—nearly half the book in fact, whereas it and the preceding lists could have been combined with a great saving of space and greater ease of consultation.

General ornithological problems apart from the economic ones are barely touched upon. We do find however that brilliant male plumage is explained upon the time-honored theory of competitive display, while it is suggested that species with the most brilliant males are probably polygamous or the males have different mates in different years, and yet Mr. S. P. Baldwin has demonstrated that the modestly colored House Wren, in which the sexes do not differ in color, is notorious in changing mates.

The illustrations in Mr. Fitzsimmon's work consist of nine beautiful colored plates from Layard and Sharpe's 'Birds of South Africa' and one from 'The Ibis,' together with a number of half-tones mainly from mounted

specimens which have often apparently been set out amidst natural surroundings, although these facts are not mentioned. There are also some good pictures from life of the Gannet rookeries of Bird Island and Ostriches on an Ostrich farm.

Mr. Fitzsimmons' book should accomplish much for the conservation of bird life in South Africa and we regret that its real mission could not have been brought out in the title.—W. S.

Dr. Townsend's 'Beach Grass.'—Dr. Charles W. Townsend, whose delightful volumes on Labrador and Ipswich beach have given enjoyment to so many lovers of nature and the great out doors, has just published another book¹ under the title of 'Beach Grass' which consists of further chronicles of the Ipswich dunes and uplands and is illustrated by many half-tones from photographs by the author.

While birds figure here and there throughout the text four chapters deal exclusively with bird life—'A Winter Crow Roost,' 'Courtship in Birds,' 'Hawking' and 'Swallows at Play.' The first two appeared previously in 'The Auk' and much of the third in the 'Bulletin of the Essex County Ornithological Club.' The chapter on Swallows deals with the life history of the Barn and Tree Swallows, two species especially characteristic of the sea coast, and Dr. Townsend's observations will prove most interesting reading to those who have studied these birds at other points on the Atlantic seaboard.

The description of the flock of migrants in the dune thickets in Chapter I, is a vivid picture of autumn migration as we find it near the coast, while the account of the courtship performances of the Terns is one of the best we have read. These are the more important ornithological contributions but a good index directs one to many other observations on various species of birds.

Of more general interest are the accounts of the dunes and the ice formations of winter; the tracks of birds, beasts and insects in the sand and the development of a 'forest' on a twelve acre lot of grass-land by the salt marsh. All of these are interesting, while throughout the book as we read Dr. Townsend's vivid descriptions of nature in her several garbs and under varied weather conditions, we seem to catch the salty smell of the sea, to feel the winds sweeping the sand before them and to hear the boom of the surf on the beach.—W. S.

Laimbeer's 'Birds I Have Known.'—This is the story of a man who took up bird study rather late in life as a result of a realization of the threatened destruction of many of our familiar species and who desires to tell us all about it. The key note of the volume² is the cultivation of an intimacy

¹ Beach Grass. By Charles Wendell Townsend, Boston, Marshall Jones Company. (212 Summer St., Boston) 1923. 12 mo. pp. i-xii + 1-319, 82 illustrations. Price \$3.50.

² Birds I Have Known. By Richard Harper Laimbeer. Illustrated with 50 Colored Plates and with 48 Snapshots from Life by the Author. G. W. Putnam's Sons, New York and London, The Knickerbocker Press. 1923, pp. i-xviii + 1-401. Price \$4.00.