

beaks near the village, and Miss Lucia Cutter tells me that she saw them as early as the middle of August. On August 25, one of them was singing in a large elm tree. The song reminded me of a weak Purple Finch song, but less varied. The occurrence of this species in summer seems rather unusual.

Vireosylva philadelphia. PHILADELPHIA VIREO.—On August 25, 1923, I observed one flitting about catching insects in a birch tree at the edge of a swamp. It was observed at a distance of about fifty feet with 8 × binoculars. The all yellow underparts and *whitish* line over the eye were distinctly noted, also the absence of distinct wing-bars. Miss Nina G. Spaulding also observed this bird.

Cistothorus stellaris. SHORT-BILLED MARSH WREN.—Since about 1914, possibly earlier, one pair of this species has bred every year in the Cutter Meadow. This is a low, damp meadow with a small brook running through it. It is overgrown with meadowsweet, chokeberry, grasses and sedges with occasional small "islands" of blueberry, alder, *Viburnum dentatum*, meadowsweet and maleberry. I have never succeeded in locating the nest, perhaps partly due to the fact that I have never been so situated that I could observe the birds through the entire breeding season. In August the parent birds appear with young ones, and about that time the male stops singing, but they stay until the middle of September. During the latter part of August they can often be found scolding in the small "islands" just described. There are so few New Hampshire records for this species that I wish to place this on record.—STUART T. DANFORTH, *Mayagüez, Porto Rico*.

RECENT LITERATURE.

Dawson's 'The Birds of California.'—This long looked for work¹ has at last appeared. It has a history reaching back almost to the time of publication of 'The Birds of Washington' by the same author in collaboration with Mr. J. H. Bowles, for in his review of that notable work Dr.

¹ The Birds of California | A Complete, Scientific and | Popular Account of the 580 Species and Subspecies of Birds | Found in the State | By William Leon Dawson | of Santa Barbara | Director of the International Museum of Comparative Oölogy, Author of "The Birds of Ohio" | and (with Mr. Bowles) of The "Birds of Washington" | Illustrated by 30 Photogravures, 120 Full-page Duetone Plates and More Than | 1100 Half-tone Cuts of Birds in Life, Nests, Eggs, and | Favorite Haunts, from Photographs | Chiefly by | Donald R. Dickey, Wright M. Pierce, William L. Finley | and the Author | Together with 44 Drawings in the Text and a Series of | 110 Full-page Color Plates | Chiefly by | Major Allan Brooks | Format De Luxe | Large Paper Edition | Complete in Four Volumes | Volume One [—Four] | South Moulton Company | San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco | 1923 [= 1924] | Sold Only by Subscription. All Rights Reserved. | Quarto (9½ × 12¼ ins.) Vol. 1, pp. i-vii + 1-522. Vol. 2, pp. i-xii + 523-1034. Vol. 3, pp. i-xiv. + 1035-1548. Vol. 4, pp. i-xiv + 1549-2121. An unpagged subtitle page is

Joseph Grinnell (The Condor, September 1909) expressed "a feeling of resentment towards the fate that led Mr. Dawson to select Washington for his field of ornithological labors, rather than California!" and in due course, as if in answer to his wish, Mr. Dawson appeared at a meeting of the Cooper Ornithological Club, in November 1910, and outlined his plans for another and still greater work on the birds of California. The Cooper Club gave this proposition its hearty approval and voted its cooperation to Mr. Dawson and in 1914 appeared a prospectus of the work which was expected to appear by May 15, 1916. Delay after delay was followed by war conditions and in August 1920 Mr. Dawson offered, in view of criticism at the delay, to relieve the Cooper Club of any responsibility whatever in connection with the publication which offer was accepted and since then he has been solely responsible for the preparation as he has always been for the financial side of the undertaking, although many of the Club members gave him continued aid for which due acknowledgment is made. In February and March, 1921 two "parts" of the work each of 64 pages, comprising the first 128 pages of Volume I of the completed work, appeared, but it was then decided not to issue further parts but to get the work out in its entirety and on January 24, 1924, we learned of its completion although the volumes all bear date of 1923.

Naturally in the case of a work so long delayed there has been much speculation as to what it would be like, and we feel that, as completed, it must fully realize the fondest hopes of both the author and subscribers. It constitutes Mr. Dawson's third state bird book having been preceded by 'The Birds of Washington' (above mentioned) in 1909 and 'The Birds of Ohio' in 1903. Each of these at the time of publication was described by reviewers as the most pretentious work on the birds of a single state that had yet appeared and we feel assured that 'The Birds of California' not only merits the same distinction but will hold it for many years to come.

In style it follows its predecessors being produced on almost exactly the same lines as 'The Birds of Washington' but since the original prospectus it has grown from three volumes to four while the number of illustrations has been vastly increased.

Ornithological publications, from the nature of the subject, offer many opportunities for elaboration and besides the author of the text there enters into the work the artist, the photographer, the engraver, the printer and the book maker all of whom may figure largely in the appearance and quality of the finished production. It seems fitting therefore that we should

inserted in Vols. 2-4 just before the main text with the numbers of the species treated—Species 103-201 in Vol. 2; 202-307 in Vol 3; 308-424 in Vol 4. None of the full page plates are numbered.

Price: De Luxe Format; Large Paper edition, \$185.; Sunset Full Fabrikoid edition \$225; Full Levant edition, \$260.; Patrons' Full Carved Inlaid edition, \$375.

Booklovers' edition, Smaller Format, four volumes, ninety-six plates, \$90; Students' edition lighter paper, three volumes, fifteen plates; Buckram, \$37.50. Half Leather, \$49.50; Full Leather, \$60.

consider such a work as this from three standpoints: that of the book; the illustrations and the text.

At our first sight of the work we are overwhelmed at the magnitude of the undertaking but the four stout volumes are none too many in which to treat of the 580 species and subspecies of birds found in California; the quarto size too is necessary to properly display the illustrations while the great weight is due to the requirement of heavily coated paper to carry off effectively the numerous half-tone text figures. It is interesting to note that in California we have presented the two extremes of thought in the matter of paper and half-tones. In this work the aim is to produce the most brilliant impressions and no consideration is given to the possible deterioration of coated paper, while in our esteemed contemporary 'The Condor' permanency of paper is regarded as all important and dullness of half-tones as a necessary accompaniment. Our successors several generations in the future will know which view was correct though whether any publications of 1924 will interest them is doubtful.

As soon as we begin to handle 'The Birds of California' we realize that author and publisher have manifestly not had in mind a hand-book for everyday use but a monumental work of reference, to be consulted on the library table and not in the easy chair by the fire-side. But the publishers have done their work remarkably well; the typography is attractive, the printing well done, the half-tones remarkably soft and the color plates and photogravures beautifully executed. We have seen only the binding of the large paper edition de luxe but it is attractive and substantial, uncut as such a work should be, gilt top and extra heavy boards covered with paper in two shades of green, while the inner lining consists of enlargements of photographs of flocking birds—Blackbirds, Cedarbirds, Gulls, and Pelicans and Ducks respectively in the four volumes. All of this work moreover with the exception of the photogravures and a few of the color plates and half-tones has been done in Los Angeles. A special bindery was, we are informed, established there for this work, though some of the editions have had to be farmed out elsewhere which will account for the further delay in delivery in certain cases. The work stands we believe as the most sumptuous publication ever produced on "the coast" and with the few exceptions above mentioned entirely the work of "home talent."

The illustrations are the outstanding feature of the work and in no other publication of the kind, we think, have they been so lavishly used. The author is himself a photographer of experience and ability and possesses a keen artistic sense, while he has had the hearty cooperation of Donald R. Dickey, who has carried artistic bird photography close to the point of perfection, and of William L. Finley and Wright M. Pierce who also stand among the leaders of the bird photographers. Most of the photographs are reproduced as half-tone text figures but there are also 120 full page duotones in which a tint of green or brown is added to the black of the half-tone with pleasing effect, and 30 photogravures printed in olive, brown or black on yellow-buff paper with beautiful

results. Finally there are the 110 color plates, from paintings, mainly by Allan Brooks but with one of the White-fronted Goose by Louis A. Fuertes and one of Lawrence's Goldfinch by George M. Sutton. Likewise a color plate of eggs and 44 half-tone text figures of birds from drawings by Brooks. Not all of the illustrations are original with this work as 130 of the text figures and some of the color plates appeared previously in the 'Birds of Washington.'

It would be hard to overpraise this array of bird pictures. Major Brooks is at his best in this series and many of his beautiful paintings represent species not hitherto adequately figured. Most of the photogravures and full page half-tones or duotones are really works of art as well as marvels of camera skill, notably the flight of Brewer's Blackbirds, the Dove on its nest, nest of Roadrunner and Leconte's Thrasher, the group of Mountain Chickadees, and the California Jay stealing an egg.

On almost every page of the book we face some bird portrait, some nest or some bit of beautiful scenery—Yosemite, Farallones or Salton Sea—until we are bewildered at the display. Criticism of such work can only be of minor details and purely on the ground of personal opinion. So we may say that to our eye the text figures would be improved if the often fantastic borders had been omitted and the photographs presented without any border at all. So too the rather flippant titles to some of the pictures do not seem in keeping with the dignity and beauty of the artists' work and smack somewhat of the captions on moving picture films.

In commenting on the text of a book one should consider what the author is endeavoring to do and to what class he is addressing himself. In the present case, if we interpret Mr. Dawson correctly, his effort is to present accounts of the birds which will interest the general reader and at the same time present the most salient points in the life history of each species. It seems to us therefore, at the outset, that the statement on the title page, that this is "a complete, scientific and popular account," is unfortunate, as the work is far from that, nor should a work on the plan of Mr. Dawson's attempt to be a "complete scientific" treatise. It would be sadly dry and uninteresting to the general reader if it were.

Looking upon the text from the standpoint taken above it seems to us in the main eminently satisfactory though the author's accounts hardly reach the high place in the field of literature that the illustrations do in the field of art. Those who can draw adequate pen pictures of birds are perhaps quite as rare as those who can depict them with the brush and far rarer than those who are successful manipulators of the camera. Moreover it is not to be expected that one writer can repeat over and over to the extent of adequately portraying the life and character of 480 species of birds. One writes best of the birds with which he is thoroughly familiar, and none are equally familiar with all the birds of a State or even of a small town. The ideal book of bird biographies must needs be the joint product of many pens and even so it oft times happens that he who knows a certain

bird best is least able to present that knowledge in a manner to constitute literature.

In Mr. Dawson's long series of bird biographies he has given us many delightful descriptions of the familiar California species and as particularly happy examples we should select those of the White-crowned Sparrows, the Linnet, the California Jay and several of the shorebirds, but in the short time at our disposal we have been unable to read carefully all of the pages of the four great volumes. As we turn these pages, however, bits of descriptive matter here and there catch the eye and stand out as literary efforts of high grade as the sketch of the Sanderling in its picturesque battle with the surf: "Forward and back, forward and back, they patter in ceaseless rhythm. Indeed they seem themselves a part of the tidal mechanism for they are swept along at the brink of the wave with foam white breasts and then disappear like bursting bubbles blending their colors with the sands which rustle with the waves retreat."

With the ability that the author displays in such passages as this it is rather depressing to find him in other instances lapsing into slang and dialectic expressions in an apparent attempt to be funny, and just as in our comment on the flippant titles to some of the pictures, we feel that this is out of place in a work as dignified as this, which does not need cheap pleasantries to make it attractive to the reader.

The several chapters "for younger readers," too, seem hardly worth while in a work of this kind. But perhaps this is all a matter of taste and certainly the great majority of Mr. Dawson's biographies are admirably suited to their purpose.

The scientific portion of the text is in the main contained in the introductory paragraphs to each species, and is arranged under the following headings: Synonyms (English); Description; Recognition Marks; Nesting; Range; Distribution in California and Authorities. The information thus presented is quite satisfactory and gives the reader in concise form the more important facts that he will desire.

Nomenclature and classification really should have no place in a work such as 'The Birds of California,' the best way being to follow some recognized authority, but our author has his own views on this matter and while adopting substantially the A. O. U. nomenclature has made some alterations based on his own preference, while his sequence of species seems also to be to some extent original. Beginning with the Crows and ending with the Grebes it is the reverse of the usual sequence but in the association of many groups is far more up to date than the A. O. U. 'Check-List'. As explained in the introduction the author uses a variety of vernacular names for the same bird which is bound to be misleading. It is interesting to note however, that the possessive "s" is used in the headings viz: "Gambel's Sparrow," while in the running titles at the top of the page it appears "Gambel Sparrow," as though to satisfy both sides in this controversy. The use of a running title such as Solitary Vireo which refers to an eastern

form, while such well known western birds as the Plumbeous and Cassin's Vireos are those discussed, is further confusing to the lay reader.

Keys to the orders, families and species, a hypothetical list and an index bring the work to a close.

It is obvious that the reviewer though he may have indulged in a few expressions of personal preference has but little criticism to make of 'The Birds of California.' It is not only like its predecessors the most pretentious work on the birds of a single state that has yet appeared, but one of the most notable of our bird books, and a lasting credit to all who have had a hand in its making.—W. S.

Dr. Phillips' 'Natural History of the Ducks.'—The second volume of Dr. Phillips' notable monograph of the Ducks¹ will make a still stronger appeal to those interested in this group of birds—both sportsmen and ornithologists—than did the first, partly because of the greater number of colored plates but mainly, we think, because it deals with so many more of the familiar American species in which we are mainly interested.

There are twenty-six full page plates, all but six in colors, twenty being from paintings by Allan Brooks, four by Louis A. Fuertes, one by H. Grönvold and a frontispiece of Mallards by F. W. Benson. Some of the plates represent more than one species although they are never crowded so as to affect the artistic beauty of the picture, while three of Brooks' plates consist of two drawings each of Ducks in the act of display during the mating season. There are also 38 outline maps showing the distribution of the species. The plates are very satisfactory, the figures being large, from two to five on a plate so that they show the details of coloring with great fidelity while their artistic character is guaranteed when we glance at the names of the artists.

As we read the text we marvel at the completeness of the author's mastery of the literature, and wonder if there is anything that he has overlooked. The account of the Mallard which comes first is virtually a scientific monograph of that species. In its synonymy, after the technical names, come the numerous vernaculars of English, French and German speaking peoples and one or more names in forty-two other languages. Then follow brief accounts of the haunts of the bird, its wariness, daily movements, gait, swimming and diving, perching, flight, sense organs, hearing, sight, touch, association with other species, voice, food, courtship, nesting status, enemies, damage, food value, domestication, hybrids and geographic races. The detailed descriptions cover all seasonal, sexual, and age conditions of plumage from downy young to adults. The

¹ A Natural History of | the Ducks | By | John C. Phillips | Associate Curator of Birds in the Museum | of comparative Zoology at Harvard College | with plates in color and in black and white | from drawings by | Frank W. Benson, Allan Brooks | Louis Agassiz Fuertes | and | Henrik Grönvold | Volume II | The Genus *Anas* | (vignette) | Boston and New York | Houghton Mifflin Company | The Riverside Press, Cambridge | 1923. Quarto pp. i-xii + 1-409, pls. 19-44; maps 28-65. Price \$50.00 per volume.