

RECENT LITERATURE.

Bent's 'Life Histories of North American Wild Fowl.'—Mr. Bent keeps steadily at his great task of compiling his life histories of the birds of North America and if the Government Printing Office could only keep pace with him the work would be farther along than it is. The present volume¹ completes the Ducks, Geese and Swans and we learn from the introduction that the volume covering the Herons and Rails is nearly completed, leaving only the shore birds to bring the water bird volumes to completion.

The present part includes the remainder of the Ducks, i. e., the Eiders, Scoters, Golden-eyes, Old-squaw, Buffle-head, Harlequin and Ruddy Duck and the Geese and Swans. In glancing through its pages we are more than ever impressed with the thoroughness of the author's work and with the vast amount of new information that has been accumulated through exploration in the arctic and subarctic regions in recent years. One also realizes that the time will not be far distant when a work of such scope will be an impossibility for one man and our monographs of the future will have to treat only of special groups or of special sections of the country.

The accounts of the breeding of various familiar winter water fowl in their far off arctic summer homes is extremely interesting reading, while the hundred odd illustrations bring vividly to our minds the habitats of the various species. These are more varied in character than the plates of some of the earlier volumes, illustrating the birds and their haunts as well as the nests and eggs.

As most of our readers are familiar with the plan of Mr. Bent's earlier volumes and his admirable style of treatment, it is necessary only to say that he has in the present part fully maintained the high standard that he there established.

He requests those who have information of value on the breeding of the shorebirds to submit it at once, in order that it may be included in volume VI, and we heartily urge all readers of 'The Auk' to give heed to this request, as Mr. Bent deserves all the assistance and cooperation that we can give him.—W. S.

La Touche's 'Handbook of the Birds of Eastern China.'—One of the most welcome publications to the general ornithologist, that has appeared recently, is Mr. La Touche's 'Handbook of the Birds of Eastern

¹ Life Histories of North American Wild Fowl. Order Anseres (Part). By Arthur Cleveland Bent of Taunton, Massachusetts (vignette) Bulletin 130 U. S. National Museum. Washington, Government Printing Office. 1925. pp. 1-376, fifty-nine of which are plates with one additional plate as a frontispiece.—Price 90 cents per copy to be ordered from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

China.¹ Those who have had Chinese collections to work up and those who have desired some comprehensive knowledge of the avifauna of this portion of Asia have been in despair for the lack of any adequate modern handbook.

From few other parts of the world have we had such a host of new forms of bird life described, in recent years, as from the provinces of China, a fact which has made the older works on the avifauna of the country quite out of date.

Mr. La Touche is peculiarly well equipped for the task which he has undertaken, having been a student of Chinese birds for a number of years not only in the museum but also as a field ornithologist thoroughly familiar with the country.

In a short introduction he explains that, while his first intention was to write of the birds of the whole of China, he has been compelled to limit his work to the eastern provinces—Chihli, Shantung, Kiangsu, Chekiang, Fohkien, and Kwangtung, on the coast, and Anhwei and Kiangsi—interior provinces with similar avifauna.

The region thus covered forms a definite section of China and includes about half of all the species known from the country. It is divisible into two distinct zoological regions separated by the lower Yangtse Valley, the northern belonging to the Palaearctic zone and the southern to the Oriental.

The author's method of treatment is to present, under each species and subspecies, a brief synonymy, a good description with measurements, a statement of distribution in China, with the character or seasons of occurrence in the several provinces, if different, and then a summary of his field experience with it and quotations from other works. etc., with notes on nests, eggs and songs. This plan seems altogether satisfactory and furnishes the information desired by the technical ornithologist, the collector or the traveller.

The part of the work now before us covers ninety-five forms of the families Corvidae, Paridae, Panuridae, Sittidae, Certhiidae, Troglodytidae, Paradoxornithidae, Timaliidae and Pycnonotidae. The type is rather small so that a vast amount of information is included in the ninety-six pages. There are three half-tone plates depicting landscapes and methods of decoy hunting.

We cannot too highly recommend Mr. La Touche's book to those desiring knowledge of the birds of China or to libraries which desire standard works on the birds of various parts of the world. We wish the author all speed in completing his task, and trust that it may meet with a reception

¹ A Handbook of the Birds of Eastern China (Chihli, Shantung, Kiangsu, Anhwei, Kiangsi, Chekiang, Fohkien, and Kwangtung Provinces). By J. D. D. LaTouche, Part I. (Containing Families Corvidae, Paridae, Panuridae, Sittidae, Certhiidae, Troglodytidae, Paradoxornithidae, Timaliidae, and Pycnonotidae.) Taylor and Francis, Red Lion Court, Fleet Street, London, E. C. 4, July, 1925. pp. 1-96. pll. I-III. Price 7s. 6% net.

cordial enough to induce him to undertake a companion work covering the remaining provinces of this interesting country.—W. S.

Kuroda's 'Avifauna of the Riu Kiu Islands.'—This handsome volume¹ of small folio size may well be termed a monograph of the birds of the interesting island group known variously as the Loo Choo or Riu Kiu chain, which, as the author says, constitutes one of the most interesting regions of the world from a zoogeographic point of view. Lying between Formosa and Japan it forms the most eastern extension of the Oriental Region, connecting it with the Palaearctic, to which the Japanese Islands belong.

The text of the work is entirely in English which greatly increases its usefulness to ornithologists. The eight excellent color plates are from paintings by a Japanese artist, Juzo Kobayashi, and the printing, done by the Tokyo Printing Co., is admirable.

While Mr. Kuroda has apparently consulted all publications relating to the birds of the islands, his work is based primarily upon collections made for him by Mr. Orii who spent fourteen months on the islands, from August, 1921 to October, 1922, visiting practically all of them.

The treatment of the 281 species and subspecies now known from the Riu Kius, consists of references to the original place of publication, with the type locality; a discussion of specimens in the author's collection, consisting of 1621 skins, with field notes by the collector and extracts from previous publications relating to the form under consideration. In the case of the subspecies there is also a list of all the other recognized subspecies with their distribution, which extends the usefulness of the work far beyond the limits of the Riu Kiu Islands.

Under "Summaries and Conclusions" there is an historic consideration of Riu Kiu ornithology with lists of species described by the author as new in previous publications, and of species here recorded from the region for the first time. Also lists of forms peculiar to the group (58 in number) those common to the Riu Kiu group and Japan (63), and to the Riu Kius and Formosa (23). The author then divides the group into four regions and lists the forms characteristic of each, adding a table of the species and subspecies so far recorded from each of the thirty-three islands of the chain. There is also a map and a bibliography of 62 titles.

One of the plates illustrates the young and adult of the remarkable Jay, *Lalocitta lidghi*, apparently the most distinctive species of the islands, which was first described by Bonaparte in 1850 as from "Japan" The true habitat, Amami-Oshima island, the most eastern of the group, was not ascertained, according to our author, until 1904, when Owston's Japanese collectors Osa and Osada, visited this spot. Curiously enough, however,

¹ A Contribution to the Knowledge of the Avifauna of the Riu Kiu Islands and the Vicinity. By Nagamichi Kuroda, Rigakuhakushi with 1 table, 8 plates and 1 map (vignette). Published by the author. Tokyo, 1925. pp. i-vi + 1-293.