

country belongs just as much to the nature lovers, which are everywhere increasing in numbers, as it does to the sportsmen, and that the latter have no right to jeopardize the native species of game birds without the approval of other bodies interested in them.—W. S.

Esten on Nest Studies. Mr. Esten has made an intensive study¹ of nests of a Towhee, Meadowlark and Rose-breasted Grosbeak and presents the results of his observations in tabular form with some additional comment. The data presented show the details of feeding, number of visits of each parent, time spent at the nest, excreta eaten and carried away, the feeding of the individual nestlings, the kind of food brought by the parents, etc. The vast amount of data presented in the small space of the tables is no less a valuable contribution to the life history of the species than an illustration of patient and painstaking observation.—W. S.

Kalmbach and McAtee's 'Homes for Birds.' This little pamphlet² is another bird box circular issued by the U. S. Biological Survey to meet the popular demand for information on this subject. It supercedes 'Bulletin 609 Bird Houses and How to Build Them,' the edition of which has apparently been exhausted and was probably never large enough to meet the needs of the country, a shortcoming of most Government publications of today. Messrs. Kalmbach and McAtee have compiled a very satisfactory Bulletin with short descriptions and illustrations of the simpler sorts of bird boxes suitable for a number of familiar species. The House Wren problem had not reached the Survey at the time this 'Bulletin' was prepared, so the usual provisions are made for the accommodation of this much discussed species. The famous cat trap of the Biological Survey is also fully described and this will prove of value to many who desire to quietly eliminate destructive felines.

The Survey has also published the usual 'Game Laws for the season 1925-26,' by George A. Lawyer, a pamphlet of 46 pages, which may be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., for 5 cents per copy.—W. S.

Sun Brothers.³—This book differs from most collections of nature tales in that whatever the natural history, there is woven with it about an equal proportion of the sayings and doings of mankind. The joy of life and the glory of love are appreciated keenly by the author, but he glosses over none of the unpleasant realities which most of us forget as soon as possible. He tells the whole truth and the effect necessarily is sombre.

¹ A Comparative Study of the Nest Life of the Towhee, Meadowlark and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. By Sidney R. Esten. Proc. Indiana Academy of Science, Vol. 34, pp. 397-401, 1924 [1925].

² Homes for Birds. By E. R. Kalmbach and W. L. McAtee. Farmers' Bulletin No. 1456, July, 1925, pp. 1-22. Price 5 cts. per copy from the Supt. of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

³ By Henry Williamson. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York, 1925, \$2.50.

The necessity of death to maintain life, the inevitable tragedy of life are brought out in every chapter, and the lesson is clear that man, in these respects, is one with his small brethren—although the play may be longer drawn out. Despite this kinship, man, who has at least the possibilities of thought and consideration, harries, maims, and destroys the wild things often at the very height of their loves, and seals the doom of the young for which they were so gallantly striving and sacrificing. The book should touch all hearts capable of sympathy and should help to bring about more tolerant and kindly relations between man and his Sun Brothers.

The scenes of the book are in southwestern England. Nine of the tales relate to mammals, seven to birds, one to a weed, and one to an unknown (a ghost that was a dream). They exhibit much ingenuity of plot, and evidence literary craftsmanship throughout. Unusual words seem a hobby of the writer, and a glossary of them would have been a help.—W. L. M.

The Buff-backed Egret (*Ardea ibis* L., Arabic *Abu Qerdan*) as a Factor in Egyptian Agriculture.¹—The paper named contains an exposition under the numerical system of the contents of the stomachs of 139 Buff-backed Egrets. The economic status of the various food items is discussed, an estimate made of the kind and quantity of food, and a balance sheet given of credit and debit food items of an individual of the species for the year. The paper is by an entomologist and was planned to prove the fallacy of Bonhote's statement² that crops to the value of two or three million pounds are saved by these birds in Egypt in one year is "enormously exaggerated." Having chosen his windmills the author soon emulates Don Quixote. While he considers "all indiscriminately predacious insects as beneficial" (p. 17), he fails to apply the same criterion to the Egret as it so well deserves, and does not recognize the compensations there are for larger predators feeding on smaller ones. He credits predacious insects and spiders as being beneficial although it is hard to understand how this can be under his criteria when their food must be drawn from the ranks of insects in general like those eaten by the Egret, most of which he gives some such annotation as "not known to be of economic importance," "not known to cause any appreciable damage," etc. If these things are true of the Egret's prey they are much more likely to be true of the smaller and less well known prey of the beetles and spiders. The Egret is debited with a considerable annual consumption of beneficial diptera, yet at the same time it is said of the disease carrying house fly, "the few millions destroyed by *Abu Qerdans* can hardly make any difference in the incredibly large fly population of the country" (p. 21). Nevertheless, he says that the *Syrphus* flies "are extremely beneficial insects, their larvae destroying immense

¹ Kirkpatrick, T. W. Bul. 56, Tech. & Sci. Service, Ministry of Agriculture, Egypt, 1925, 28 pp.

² Reviewed in *The Auk*, Vol. 40, No. 1, Jan. 1923, pp. 162-163.