

## RECENT LITERATURE.

**Dr. Phillips' 'Natural History of the Ducks.'**—In a portly volume of nearly 500 pages, Dr. Phillips brings to a close his notable 'Natural History of the Ducks.'<sup>1</sup> This part (Vol. IV) concludes the Fuligulinae—the Scoters, Labrador Duck and Eiders, and covers the Ruddy Ducks, Torrent Ducks and Mergansers. Along with the Torrent Ducks are arranged two curious and isolated species, Salvadori's Duck from New Guinea and Waigiu and the Blue Duck from New Zealand, the former known only from a very few specimens and the latter threatened with extinction through its remarkable stupidity and the advance of settlements into its native haunts. With no anatomical studies of either species their actual relationship is still a matter of doubt.

Dr. Phillips regards all of the Scoters as congeneric and recognizes only three species *Oidemia americana* being considered a subspecies of *O. nigra* while our White-winged Scoter he places as a subspecies of *O. fusca*, of this species he also recognizes an Asiatic race *stejnegeri* and tentatively a western American form *dizoni*. Six races of the Eider Duck are recognized, both *dresseri* and *v-nigra* being looked upon as subspecies and other races are admitted for Norway, the Faroes and West Greenland. Three races of the Merganser are admitted from Europe, North America and Asia while besides the Red-breasted, there are three other distinct species the Chinese, Aukland and Brazilian Mergansers, all of them rare, and possibly nearly extinct.

In the "Addenda" there is added an account and plate of the beautiful Crested Shelldrake (*Pseudotadorna cristata*) described and named by Mr. Nagamichi Kuroda from recently killed specimens. This bird appeared in old Japanese pictures and was generally considered a myth or at least some sort of hybrid. In view of the recent capture of a pair and the lack of any indication of hybrid origin it is generally conceded to be a valid species, probably at the very end of its career and the last of the Anatidae to be recognized.

The present volume contains a colored frontispiece of flying Eiders by Benson, and 31 other plates, one by Fuertes, seven by Grönvöld, two by Kobayashi and 21 by Allan Brooks. Of this series 23 are in color. There are also 23 distributional maps and a most exhaustive bibliography covering 127 pages in double column. A page of errata and a comprehen-

<sup>1</sup> 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, Henrik Grönvöld and S. Kobayashi. Volume IV, Fuligulinae (concluded), Oxyurinae, Merganettinae and Merginae. [vignette.] Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, The Riverside Press Cambridge, 1926. pp. i-xi, +1-489, pls. 71-102, maps 96-118. price \$50.

sive index to the entire work close the volume which is the finest of the series and a fitting close to a great undertaking. Dr. Phillips has issued a limited number of copies of the bibliography separately bound.

From the time of Catesby and Edwards large illustrated works on birds have formed a conspicuous part of ornithological literature, often faunal in character, they, later, in the folio volumes of Gould and Elliot, took the form of monographs of families. With the more detailed studies of recent years where diagrams of characters are, from the purely technical standpoint, more important than colored plates, it would be supposed that such works might cease to be published, but it is most gratifying to find that the traditions of our science have not been entirely lost and that it is still possible, through the energy and support of lovers of fine books to produce such works, especially since the talents of both artists and field naturalists make the work of the present day superior in many respects to the classics of the past.

Quarto rather than folio size seems better for many reasons and gives the artist just as great opportunities as did the life size efforts of days gone by while the character of the text has greatly improved.

Dr. Phillips' book stands in the front rank of these modern illustrated monographs and he is to be heartily congratulated upon the completion of his task in bringing out this 'Natural History of the Ducks.' He has not only given us some of the best work of the recent bird artists but has written a text that demands our admiration for the exhaustive research involved in its preparation and the broad knowledge of the subject that he has displayed.—W. S.

**Wetmore on the Birds of Argentina.**<sup>1</sup>—As many of our readers are aware, Dr. Alexander Wetmore spent practically a year (June 21, 1920—April 29, 1921) investigating the bird life of Argentina and the adjoining countries, especially the status of the migrant shore birds, in the interests of the U. S. Department of Agriculture with which he was then connected. The present volume is the completed report of his experiences and the collection which he procured.

Those familiar with the thoroughness of Dr. Wetmore's work will be prepared for the admirable report which he has presented and which forms one of the most important contributions to Argentina ornithology that has yet appeared.

His narrative is interesting reading, describing the general character of the country through which he travelled, including several excursions in various directions from Buenos Ayres as a center; a survey of Uruguay; long trips up the Uruguay and Parana Rivers, the latter terminating in the interior Chaco northwest of Asuncion; and another trip to Tucuman and

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<sup>1</sup> Observations on the Birds of Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Chile. By Alexander Wetmore, Assistant Secretary, Smithsonian Institution. U. S. National Museum Bulletin 133, pp. i-iv, +1-448. pls. 1-20. Washington, 1926. Government Printing Office, 65 cents per copy.