

## RECENT LITERATURE.

**Forbush's 'Birds of Massachusetts.'**—A little more than two years ago we had the pleasure of reviewing Volume I of the 'Birds of Massachusetts' and now Volume II<sup>1</sup> is before us. All that was then said in praise of both text and illustrations holds good for the present volume, as both author and artist have fully maintained the high standard that they set in the initial part of the work.

Notable among the many interesting biographies in the volume before us is the account of the Passenger Pigeon which covers the whole range of the bird as well as its occurrence in the state of Massachusetts, and which demonstrates that we have no record of the taking of a specimen for over twenty years and only one thoroughly authentic record of a specimen obtained in the past thirty.

Of the plates, of which there are twenty-eight, all by the late Louis Agassiz Fuertes, those that strike us as particularly attractive are the paintings of the Duck Hawk, the Jays, the Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers and the Owls. An excellent picture of a number of Hawks in flight by Fuertes and a sort of Hawk map by Dr. J. B. May, representing the under surface of all our Hawks (as previously done by Seton, Auk, 1897, p. 395), are a great help in the identification of these birds which are usually seen on the wing. Another useful feature is the inclusion in the text of a number of little maps of Massachusetts upon which are plotted summer, winter and nesting records of various birds by means of small dots, triangles and squares, respectively. There are also thirty-two half-tones from photographs of nests, eggs, and young of various species.

Mr. Forbush's introduction includes accounts of the topography of Massachusetts and other New England States, the climate of New England, the faunal areas, changes in bird life, changes wrought by man and natural enemies of birds. The main text following the order of the A. O. U. 'Check-List,' covers the 'land birds' from the Gallinaceous species to the Icteridae among the Passeres.

The author's faunal map of New England is interesting as it shows the areas that are considered intermediate between the Canadian and Transition and between the latter and the Carolinian fauna as well as the regions where there is a tinge of Hudsonian. The true Canadian Fauna, it seems, enters Massachusetts at only two points on the northern border

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<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts Department of Agriculture. Dr. Arthur W. Gilbert Commissioner. *Birds of Massachusetts and Other New England States* by Edward Howe Forbush, Part II. *Land Birds from Bob-whites to Grackles*. Illustrated with Colored Plates from Drawings by Louis Agassiz Fuertes and Figures and Cuts from Drawings and Photographs by Others. Issued by Authority of the Legislature 1927. pp. i-1 + 1-461, pl. 34-62, figs. 36-67, 18 maps and 34 cuts in text. Price \$5.00.

and the true Carolinian not at all, being restricted to the lower Connecticut Valley and the north coast of Long Island Sound.

Mr. Forbush's comments on the natural enemies of birds deserve the careful attention of all of his readers. He says, very truly, "In a state of nature the natural enemies of any species are as essential to its welfare as are food, water, air, and sunlight. They serve to check the increase and regulate the numbers of other species which in turn, when so regulated, tend to perform a similar office for vegetation. Unthinking people are slow to realize this. . . . We destroy the Great Horned Owl, the greatest enemy of the Crow and Crows become unduly numerous and injurious. If we seriously reduce the Crows, Robins, upon which they prey, will probably become so abundant as to do great injury to small fruits. . . . The indiscriminate destruction of Herons, Hawks, Owls, Crows, skunks, weasels and other enemies of rats and mice and the larger insects, is sure to result in great periodical increases of such creatures which never can be checked by humans without great effort and expense." These are but a few of the many carefully explained instances of the danger of upsetting Nature's balance, and one should read them all and be careful to follow Mr. Forbush's advice that "the views of the well-meaning but misinformed man who advocates the extermination of lesser native natural enemies of birds should be given no serious consideration."

In the preface the author pays a tribute to the late Louis Agassiz Fuertes and as we look upon his beautiful plates—the last that he prepared for publication, we realize once more the great loss that both science and art have suffered in his passing. We understand that some of the plates for Volume III were prepared before his death but the completion of the series must be entrusted to another hand.

We trust that by this time Mr. Forbush has gotten the remainder of his text so far completed that he will soon be free from the enormous labor that its preparation has entailed, and in heartily congratulating him on the completion of Volume II, we wish him all speed with Volume III.—W. S.

**Bent's 'Life Histories of North American Shore Birds.'**—Mr. Arthur Cleveland Bent with tireless energy has produced another—the seventh—volume<sup>1</sup> of his 'Life Histories' of North American Birds. This covers about half of the Shore-birds including the Phalaropes, the Stilts and Avocets and the Snipe and Sandpipers from *Scolopax* to *Totanus* in the sequence of the A. O. U. 'Check-List.' When the other volume of the Shore-birds appears the entire series of the 'water birds' will have been completed.

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<sup>1</sup> Life Histories of North American Shore Birds. Order Limicolae (Part I). By Arthur Cleveland Bent of Taunton, Massachusetts. Bulletin 142, U. S. Nat. Mus., United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1927. pp. i-ix + 1-420, pl. 1-55 (included in pagination). Price 85 cents; from Superintendent of Documents, Gov't. Printing Office, Washington, D. C.