

Mr. Shepard has performed a service not only to the admirers of Thoreau but to Thoreau himself by thus spreading a better knowledge of the man as one of the great American authors.—W. S.

Raven's 'The Ramblings of a Bird Lover.'—The author of this readable little book¹ tells us that it: "was written for the joy of it, and with no ulterior motive except the hope that something of that joy may be passed on." He then describes his experiences in bird photography—the recreation in this case of a Canon of the Church—and all who have a similar love of nature and of bird study will follow his accounts with pleasure and profit, while the bird photographer will experience many a thrill at the success of a fellow enthusiast.

The fields of the author's activities are the coasts and uplands of England and Scotland, with a trip one summer to Holland to visit the Burdets. In the eleven chapters, sixteen land and thirty-two water-birds are discussed while the book is illustrated with thirty half-tone plates presenting sixty-seven photographs by the author.

Dr. Raven is a good observer and a scholarly writer and has made a valuable contribution to the life histories of the birds he has studied, as well as providing an entertaining book for the general reader. Bird students in any country will find his volume a welcome addition to their libraries.—W. S.

Taverner on Red-tailed Hawks.—In this paper Mr. Taverner presents the results of his studies of the Red-tailed Hawks, especially those of Canada. Unlike previous attempts to satisfactorily explain the variations in these perplexing birds, Mr. Taverner's study is based to a great extent upon breeding individuals sometimes accompanied by young, which renders his conclusions much more accurate.

He states that the Red-tail acquires a "juvenile" plumage upon leaving the nest, and retains it until the annual molt, of the next summer, approximately fifteen months. He, moreover, doubts that any individuals breed in this plumage and is of the opinion that the first nesting occurs when the birds are two years old.

The eastern and western Red-tails are distinct geographical subspecies, the former (*borealis*) having but a single phase of plumage, while the latter (*calurus*) has two—a light and a dark or melanistic phase. The dark phase, moreover, as often happens in cases of melanism, is somewhat local.

The more or less black Harlan's Hawk, *Buteo borealis harlini*, the distribution of which does not conform to any definite geographic area, Mr. Taverner regards as identical with the melanistic phase of *calurus*, and the name being the older of the two, he claims that it should prevail for the Western Red-tail. The black and white Krider's Hawk, *Buteo borealis*

¹The Ramblings of a Bird Lover. By Charles E. Raven, D.D. Canon of Liverpool and Chaplain to the King. Illustrated with sixty-seven photographs by the author. London: Martin Hopkinson & Co. Ltd. 14 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W. C. 1927, pp. i-xvi + 1-186. Price 10 shillings 6 pence net.

krideri, he considers a dimorphic color form of the eastern Red-tail, limited to the western portion of its range and apparently merging into the western Red-tail. *Buteo b. alascensis* of Alaska he dismisses as identical with the eastern race.

Three colored plates of birds and tail feathers illustrate the paper very satisfactorily and there is a full bibliography.

Mr. Taverner has certainly thrown much light upon a puzzling problem and we see no reason why his general conclusions are not sound.¹ There may, however, be some question as to the advisability of upsetting the current name of the Western Red-tail since Audubon's type specimen of *harlani* is not extant and there seems to be some doubt as to just what it was. It is not a good plan to replace a certainty with an uncertainty in nomenclature. This is purely a matter of nomenclature and in no way affects Mr. Taverner's disposition of the birds usually called *harlani*. There may also be some question as to relegating *krideri* to synonymy since it is not an albino and has a fairly definite range and consequent claims to recognition as a subspecies.—W. S.

Strecker on the Birds of McLennan Co., Texas.—Mr. Strecker presents an annotated list² of 254 species and subspecies of birds observed in McLennan Co., Texas, with especial reference to the city of Waco and its public park, Cameron Park, now maintained as a bird sanctuary. The author remembers this tract of land as it was thirty years ago, when essentially a wilderness, and his comparison of the relative abundance of birds at that time and in the present forms one of the valuable features of the list.

The paper constitutes another up-to-date county list, which will be of much assistance to local bird students, as well as a valuable work of reference.—W. S.

Strecker on Birds and Snake Skins.—Following up his publication in 'The Auk' 1926, p. 501, on the use of snake sloughs as nesting material Mr. Strecker publishes³ more details and speculations upon this problem. He finds about ten distinct species of birds which habitually use cast off snake skins in the construction of their nests and others which do so occasionally.

His conclusions are that birds do not fear snake skins nor do their enemies. In other words they do not associate the cast skin with the live

¹ A Study of *Buteo borealis*, the Red-tailed Hawk, and its Varieties in Canada. By P. A. Taverner. Museum Bulletin No. 48. Victoria Memorial Museum Biol. Series No. 13, Nov. 11, 1927. pp. 1-21. Price 25 cts.

² Notes on the Ornithology of McLennan County, Texas. By John K. Strecker, Curator, Baylor University Museum. Special Bulletin Baylor University Museum, Number One. November Nineteen Twenty-seven. (Waco, Texas.) pp. 1-65.

³ Birds and Snake-Skins. By John K. Strecker. Contributions from Baylor University Museum Number Eleven. Waco, Texas, May 15, 1927. pp. 1-12.