

### RECENT LITERATURE.

**Alexander's 'Birds of the Ocean.'**<sup>1</sup>—While many men have described the birds of many lands, Mr. Alexander, is, we believe the first to treat comprehensively of the birds of the ocean.

His aim has been to prepare a "convenient handbook for the identification of the various species of sea birds likely to be met with on ocean voyages in any part of the world." The birds that he includes in the term "sea birds" comprise the Albatrosses, Petrels, Gulls, Terns, Skimmers, Skuas, Auks, Penguins, Frigate Birds, Pelicans, Gannets, Cormorants, Tropic Birds, and Phalaropes, and all species of these groups are described.

This seems to cover the subject most satisfactorily—indeed the only other birds likely to be seen would be certain Ducks and Geese and these would be readily distinguished from any of the other families, while they would be encountered only near the shore.

At the head of each family is an excellent account of the habits and characters of the group as a whole, followed by a list of the species with brief descriptions, measurements, ranges and egg dates, and some pertinent notes on plumages, resemblances to other forms, and field marks. There is also a short key which divides the species into groups by conspicuous color characters.

At the close of the volume are several valuable chapters describing the bird life of the several oceans—North Atlantic, North Pacific, Tropical Seas, Southern Oceans—each divided again into secondary regions the North Atlantic comprising, for instance, the Open ocean, Northern Coasts, Atlantic Coast of the United States, Coasts of southern Europe, Northwest Africa, Mediterranean and Black Seas and the Subtropical Islands. From these "faunal lists" the voyager may know at once what to look for and save himself much time and trouble in running down his species. There is also a systematic list of the 294 species described and a good index. The nomenclature is up to date but commendably conservative in the matter of genera, and subspecies are wisely mentioned only in the notes, with their respective ranges but with no attempt to differentiate them as their characters can rarely be distinguished in the field.

Mr. Alexander is peculiarly well equipped for his task having been a voyager over most of the oceans whose birds he describes, and well trained in his knowledge of sea birds. He is to be congratulated upon producing a most original book—by no means an easy feat in these days—and one that will be a delight to the ornithologist afloat as well as a convenient work of reference when on land or even in the museum.

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<sup>1</sup> *Birds of the Ocean.* By W. B. Alexander. A Handbook for Voyagers containing descriptions of all the sea birds of the world, with notes on their habits and guides to their identification. With 140 illustrations. G. W. Putman's Sons. New York and London. The Knickerbocker Press, 1928. pp. i-xx, 1-428. Price \$3.50.

The book is of small pocket size and is illustrated by 88 excellent plates from photographs by various ornithologists—mainly Americans—and drawings by the author, showing the color patterns of various species in flight.—W. S.

**Pleske's 'Birds of the Eurasian Tundra.'**—The first publication from the income of the William Brewster Fund of the Boston Society of Natural History,<sup>1</sup> is a voluminous report on the bird life of the Eurasian Tundra by the Russian ornithologist Theodore Pleske.

The work was originally intended to be merely a report on the collections obtained by the Russian Polar Expedition of 1900-03 under the late Baron Edward von Toll. The author, however, realized that so many papers dealing with arctic bird life were written in Russian and were thus unknown to most ornithologists, and that these as well as the rich unpublished material in the Russian Zoological Museum added so much to our knowledge, even to the data contained in such monographs as Schalow's 'Fauna der Arktis,' and decided that a broader treatment covering the entire tundra of Europe and Asia and not merely the region to which the work of the Expedition was restricted, would be preferable.

The result has been a splendid monograph of the birds of arctic Europe and Asia with the results of the Polar Expedition woven into the general account. Part I consists of an outline of the course of the Russian Polar Expedition. In Part II, the systematic report, seventy-one species are considered as belonging to the tundra fauna and are here treated at length while many others are mentioned as casual visitors with the records of their occurrence. Part III lists papers dealing with the birds of each of the twenty-one sections into which the author divides the Eurasian tundra with corresponding lists of the birds recorded from each, each list prefaced with a sketch of the location and physical features of the section. Part IV contains the author's conclusions,

He regards the tundra as a part of the Arctic Alpine Life Zone and denies the necessity of elevating it to the rank of an independent zone as has been done by certain zoogeographers. A thorough analysis of the avifauna of the Eurasian Tundra is presented and comparisons made with the works of Schalow and Palmen. The Holarctic Region is divided into the Atlanto-European Province (including East Greenland), the Sibero-American Province and the North Pacific Province; each with an Alpine (tundra), Subalpine (brush), and Sylvan (forest) zone.

There are seventeen plates from photographs illustrating scenery and nests and eggs of birds, and six plates in color depicting a nest full of young Snowy Owls, the downy young of the Sanderling, eggs of the Curlew Sandpiper and Sanderling, downy young of the Knot, eggs of the Knot and the Turnstone, and *Lagopus rupestris* in mottled autumnal plumage.

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs of the Boston Society of Natural History, Vol. 6, No. 3. Birds of the Eurasian Tundra. By Theodore Pleske. With twenty-three Plates. Boston: Printed for the Society, April, 1928, pp. 111-485, pll. 16-38.