

accounts of camp life in the wilder parts of New England; fishing and ducking anecdotes and fuller and more serious accounts of grouse shooting. Dr. Phillips' experiences however are not limited to New England. There is a chapter on Currituck memories and others on Moose hunting in New Brunswick, on the pursuit of the Chamois in the Alps, on shooting Reindeer in Greenland and Bighorn Sheep in what is now Glacier National Park.

The author's comments on ducking methods in the past and present are both interesting and amusing. He describes pot hunting among moonlit ice cakes on the Ipswich meadows, shooting the birds "sitting if we could and flying if we couldn't, and yet we did not get as many ducks in an entire season as a present day shooter can kill at a baited blind on Currituck in a week or even a day, and where neither weather-wise lore nor hardihood is necessary to kill the limit!"

It is, no doubt, the increase in hunters and the improved facilities rather than the old methods that have threatened our duck supply but we must have stringent laws nevertheless if we are to save the game birds for posterity. Dr. Phillips' attractive book is beautifully printed on heavy paper and illustrated with wonderfully delicate reproductions of drawings of birds, dogs, gunners, etc., by A. L. Ripley. In all respects it is the sort of book that lovers of handsome publications like to have.—W. S.

**Linsdale on Variation in the Fox Sparrow.**—This<sup>1</sup> is primarily a study of variation and since the author considers that more significant results might be obtained by a study of the smallest discernable deviations within a species, rather than by studying larger groups, which are less similar, he has selected the Fox Sparrows which have already been divided upon external characters into a large number of subspecies. With 465 skeletons of Fox Sparrows representing fourteen of the sixteen subspecies he has made measurements of three skull dimensions, two of the ramus, the length and breadth of the sternum, length of the pelvis, femur, tibia, tarsus, humerus, radius, ulna, coracoid, scapula and furcula.

There are also discussions of variation in the food, habits, distribution, migration, song, and nesting of the several subspecies.

Several well marked tendencies to vary geographically in habits and in response to environment are found in Fox Sparrows, and these follow a definite order so that it is possible to point out parallels between them and tendencies to vary in features of structure. The author was unable to find any advantage to the bird in the possession of the enlarged bill and skull characteristic of some subspecies, but some other skeletal characters did appear to have a definite value.

After arguing that it is desirable for the persons who work in systematics to understand the phases of variation of the objects with which

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<sup>1</sup> Variation in the Fox Sparrow (*Passerella iliaca*) with Reference to Natural History and Osteology. By Jean M. Linsdale. Univ. Calif. Publ. in Zool. Vol. 30, No. 12, pp. 251-392, pls. 16-20, and 38 text figures. Univ. of Calif. Press, Berkeley, California. 1928.

they deal and mentioning the small amount of material at the disposal of the early systematists, the author remarks that it is surprising that they made so few errors. It would seem to us that while a study such as is here presented has a value all its own, that such an amount of study is not actually necessary for systematic work. The systematist soon recognizes what sort of characters are likely to prove of value in separating species or subspecies and that is why he makes comparatively few errors even with a very small amount of material.

Mr. Linsdale has certainly presented a vast amount of data which is available for various lines of investigation and other interesting deductions may doubtless be made from it besides those that he has formulated. One point of interest to the systematist is his conclusion that there are no characters of any sort by which the genera *Passerella* and *Melospiza* may be definitely separated, a fact that has apparently been suspected by others but no one has ventured to combine the two groups with their long array of subspecies. However since Dr. Wetmore and Mr. Miller have allowed them to stand in their outline of classification for the new A. O. U. 'Check-List' there may be some differential characters that Mr. Linsdale has failed to grasp, possibly obscured by the excessive plasticity of both genera, or is it simply a matter of personal opinion such as confronts us in the recognition of various other genera and species?

There are a number of excellent photographic plates of skulls of Fox Sparrows and many charts showing variations.—W. S.

**Mathews' 'Birds of Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands.'**—This volume<sup>1</sup> as distinctly stated by the author is not a supplement to his 'Birds of Australia' although a useful addition to that work. As a matter of fact it is exactly uniform with the other work and the second part consists of "Birds of the South Polar Quadrant and Additions to 'The Birds of Australia'."

There are 39 species and subspecies recorded from the two islands all but five of which are figured on the 29 plates which are mainly colored, and from drawings by Grönvold.

The second part of the volume consists of sixteen plates, all in colors illustrating the six additional species of the South Polar region and a number of additional forms for Australia with notes on several others. So far as we can see there are no new forms described in this work. Mr. Mathews considers that the regions here covered belong naturally and faunally to Australia and suggests that in any new list their birds be added to the Australian avifauna. The text and plates are fully up to the standard set in 'The Birds of Australia' and the work is most welcome,

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<sup>1</sup> The Birds of Norfolk & Lord Howe Islands and the Australian South Polar Quadrant with Additions to "The Birds of Australia." By Gregory M. Mathews, author of "The Birds of Australia" with Hand-colored and Monochrome Plates. H. F. and G. Witherby, 326 High Holborn, London. 1928. pp. i-xii + 1-139, pll. 1-45 (unnumbered). Published October 16, 1928.