

Skinner's Guide to the Winter Birds of the North Carolina Sandhills.—Heretofore we seem to have concentrated most of our attention on the summer birds of the regions of which we write, doubtless because they constitute the breeding species and it is upon breeding areas that all zoogeographical work must be based. Then too the nesting season covers the most interesting cycles of the bird's life history.

Now however we are beginning to learn from bird banding that certain if not all birds have as definite a winter home as a summer range and it is quite fitting that works on the winter birds of definite areas should appear. Among the hosts of northern people who now go south for the winter, there must be many bird lovers, and books on the winter bird life of the regions that they visit will be most welcome.

The first work to fill such a need is the attractive volume by Milton P. Skinner on the 'Winter Birds of the North Carolina Sandhills.'¹ The author's plan is admirable. Under each species we have field identification marks, a concise description, and a paragraph on general distribution followed by a sketch of the habits of the species based mainly upon personal observation and full of interesting details.

The illustrations consist of characteristic photographs of scenes in the North Carolina sandhills and twelve colored plates from paintings by E. J. Sawyer, in his happy style of grouping a number of species together according to habitat. Mr. Sawyer's ability to get into his minute figures all of the characteristics of the species is well known and these plates are fully up to his high standard. A most useful plate, of a different type, consists of the heads of the Sparrows in winter plumage and there is also a color chart.

The book is dedicated to the late Dr. John Warren Achorn by a memorial committee of his friends. Dr. Achorn, a retired Boston physician, spent many winters in the sandhills and had long contemplated such a work as has now been produced and his friends securing the services of Mr. Skinner have most successfully carried out his idea.

Two chapters by Dr. Achorn himself have been added to the main text, one being a general sketch of the bird life of the sandhills and the other explaining the game of "bird golf" which Dr. Achorn devised, based upon competitive daily lists.

The little volume is an important addition to ornithological literature and a credit to all connected with its preparation.—W. S.

Napier's 'On the Barrier Reef.'—This popular account² of the great

¹ A Guide to the Winter Birds of the North Carolina Sandhills. By Milton P. Skinner with chapters by Dr. John Warren Achorn. Illustrated in color by Edmund J. Sawyer. Albany, N. Y. 1928. [Selling Agency: The Science Press Distributing Company, Grand Central Terminal, New York, N. Y.] pp. i-xiv+1-301, pll. 1-13, full page figs. 1-30. Price \$4.00.

² On the Barrier Reef. Notes from a No-ologist's Pocket-Book. S. Elliott Napier. Australia; Angus & Robertson Limited. 89 Castlereagh Street Sydney. 1928. pp. 1-173.

Barrier Reef of Australia is most interesting reading. There is a chapter on the history of the reef, which by the way covers some 80,000 square miles and is about 1500 miles in length, some account of its explorers, of the author's cruise about its islands and much about the marvels of the oceanic life that abounds there—corals, crabs, fish, turtles, etc.

To the ornithologist three chapters have an especial appeal although birds figure in many other parts of the volume. One of these treats of the Mutton Bird, or Wedge-tailed Shearwater, which digs its nests in the crumbly soil of the islands, arriving at night in swarms from the ocean, and departing at dawn. The vocal powers of this bird according to the author exceed those of any beast or bird that he has ever heard. "The Lyre-bird" he says "is regarded as our champion mimic but he can imitate only what he hears. The Mutton Bird on the other hand can mimic anything whatever whether he has heard it or not and does it for eight hours on end without a pause." The long burrows which the birds construct and the little paths down which they travel to the sea are interestingly described. Another chapter considers the Noddy Terns and Gannets and a third the Herons, Gulls and Terns which nest in large colonies on the reef islands.

Even though the author styles himself an "No-ologist" he presents much interesting information about the birds and other animals of which he writes while his keen sense of humor makes his accounts most attractive. This is a nature book well worth having.—W. S.

Astley's 'From a Bird Lover's Diary.'—Here is another charming description of English bird life.¹ The chapters were originally published in 'Parents' Review' and have now been put in book form with some slight revision but the author has been careful "not to destroy the atmosphere of personal observation which is the only thing about bird watching that matters."

There are chapters on the twelve months of the year with a typical bird for each as the central theme. The Golden-crested Wren for January, the Redstart for June, the Woodcock for October, etc. Other chapters treat of bird life of a northern lake, of a northern woodland, of a northern mountain; of flight, migration, song and nest habits, while many delightful photographs of rural England serve as illustrations.

Mr. Astley has been a life long bird watcher and all the observations here set forth are matters of personal experience. For him who would gain a clear picture of British bird life such a work as this, with its intimate studies, seems to us better than the systematic text book. To the host of "bird watchers" in America it should have a strong appeal.—W. S.

Snyder on the Summer Birds of Lakes Nipigon and Abitibi, Ontario.—The staff of the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology has been en-

¹ *From a Bird-Lover's Diary.* By Arthur Astley. London: The Sheldon Press, Northumberland Avenue, W. C. 2. New York and Toronto: The Macmillan Company. pp. i-ix + 1-306.