

**Bates' 'Handbook of the Birds of West Africa.'**<sup>1</sup>—Since the time of Paul DuChaillu, West Africa has held a foremost place in the interest of naturalists. The DuChaillu collections, still preserved in the Philadelphia Academy, have been the basis of ornithological study of the region and furnished John Cassin with the material for his classic papers on the birds of the Gaboon region, published some eighty years ago.

Next to DuChaillu and Cassin the name most closely associated with the birds of West Africa is that of George L. Bates, whose long residence in Cameroon has made him the authority on the birds of the region, and whose collections have enriched the African series in the British Museum, the Philadelphia Academy and other institutions. It was the pleasure of the reviewer, a good many years ago, to show Mr. Bates the DuChaillu collections and the Cassin types when he was on a visit to America and it is therefore with a personal interest that he has perused this excellent 'Handbook' of the Birds of West Africa.

The work was prepared at the British Museum with its wealth of material always at the author's command, and it is therefore authoritative in every way. The nomenclature follows Scater's 'Systema Avium Aethiopicarum' in nearly every particular, while native names have been supplied from Mr. Bates' personal knowledge, for many of the species. The volume is strictly a handbook, with keys for the determination of genera and species, adequate though brief descriptions, and a paragraph on habits, etc. No authorities for the names are given and no reference to the original description nor to synonymy. While most of this information may be obtained from Scater's 'Systema' and was probably for that reason considered unnecessary in this connection, it would, we think, have been a great convenience to have had the reference to the place of description stated, especially since for probably many years to come the principal users of the work will be the technical ornithologists of the museums.

The species or typical subspecies (or else the Cameroon form) is given in larger type, while the allied subspecies appear in a smaller type below. There are generic diagnoses as well as many text figures.

The introduction contains an explanation of nomenclature and of the keys, a sketch of the physical features of West Africa and the character of its avifauna, as well as the several zoogeographical zones into which it may be divided, and a map. West Africa, as the author treats it, lies between lat. 20° and the Gulf of Guinea, reaching eastward to Lake Chad and south on the mainland to 2° north latitude covering all of the British possessions and practically all of Cameroon. The zones recognized by Mr. Bates are the Forest, Savannah, the Thorny Scrub and the Cameroon Mountains.

Although the total number of species of this area is not stated, we learn

<sup>1</sup> Handbook of the Birds of West Africa. By George Latimer Bates [etc. etc.] Illustrations by H. Grönvold, London, John Bale Sons and Danielsson, Ltd. 83-91, Great Titchfield Street, W. 1. 1930. Pp. i-xxiii, 1-572, map and frontispiece plate. Price 30 shillings net.

that in Cameroon alone there are upward of 670 which gives some idea of the richness of the fauna although according to the author it becomes richer as we proceed eastward, the bird population having apparently progressed from the east westward and he calls attention to the much poorer fauna of the extreme western part of West Africa.

All workers on African birds owe Mr. Bates a debt of gratitude for this excellent handbook which will prove of the greatest assistance in pursuing the study of the avifauna of this historic region.—W. S.

**Priest's Guide to the Birds of Southern Rhodesia.**—This little volume<sup>1</sup> published by the Government of the Colony of Southern Rhodesia is intended to stimulate interest in the study and protection of the birds of the country, especially among the children, and if generally distributed among the schools, as apparently intended, it will undoubtedly go far toward arousing such an interest.

The brief accounts of the species usually contain the most striking color features of the birds, while the general paragraph at the head of each group of allied species presents some of their habits. Unfortunately the method of description is not uniform and different terms are used in different descriptions which will confuse the young reader—i. e. sometimes the "feet" are described sometimes the "extremities" etc. The alphabetical method of arranging the birds is bad as it gives the reader no idea of relationship which he would unconsciously acquire if a systematic sequence were adopted. We find the Hobby Falcon under "F" while the Cuckoo Falcon is under "C" which breaks down even the alphabetical arrangement, while the Robin appears under "C" because it is treated in the "Chat" group. There would have been no need, moreover, for the long systematic list of names at the end if a systematic sequence had been adopted throughout.

The illustrations consist of fourteen colored plates from paintings by Mrs. I. Mount, which are sometimes too obviously from poorly mounted birds, and a number of crude outline drawings.

The object of this publication is most praiseworthy and it is regrettable, with so many popular bird books designed to attract the attention and interest of children and beginners, and based upon study and experience as to the best way to accomplish this end, that advantage was not taken of them as models in preparing this book and the value and power of a worthy publication thereby vastly increased.—W. S.

**Saunders' 'Summer Birds of the Northern Adirondacks.'**—It is fitting that a list of Adirondack birds should be published in the 'Roosevelt

<sup>1</sup> A Guide to the Birds of Southern Rhodesia and a Record of their Nesting Habits. By Captain Cecil D. Priest [etc. etc.]. With 14 Coloured and 112 Black and White Illustrations. London: William Clowes & Sons Ltd. Duke Street, Stamford Street, S. E. 1, by arrangement with the High Commissioner for Southern Rhodesia, Crown House, Aldwych, W. C. 2. 1929. pp. 1-xix + 1-233. Price 17 shillings. Herald Book store, Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia.