

RECENT LITERATURE.

Roberts' 'Birds of Minnesota.'—At the organization meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union in 1883, the founders elected a small number of additional members among whom was Thomas S. Roberts, even then the outstanding ornithologist of Minnesota. Ever since then when mention is made of Minnesota bird life the name of Roberts immediately comes to mind. In all these fifty years, Dr. Roberts has been accumulating a store of knowledge on the birds of his state that has seldom been equaled by a single ornithologist in any commonwealth, and for a good part of this time he has had in mind a definite idea of publishing the results of his studies. Thanks to the generosity of his friends in Minnesota this has now been accomplished and 'The Birds of Minnesota' in two volumes¹ is before us, aggregating some 1500 pages of text with 92 colored plates and a wealth of text figures.

One must study the work at first hand to realize the vast amount of information that it contains as it is impossible to do it justice in the short space at our disposal. The nomenclature and sequence is that of the new 'A. O. U. Check-List'—a wise practice since it avoids confusion on the part of the readers who in vast majority are not concerned with differences of opinion on matters of scientific names. Additional "common" names are added to facilitate identification. When two races of a species occur in the state they are usually treated together with a mention of their differences and respective ranges, but sometimes they are accorded separate treatment when the difference between them is noticeable—and after all degree of difference rather than the fact of intergradation is what the average reader is concerned with.

Under each species we find paragraphs relating to General Range, Range in Minnesota, Migration Dates and Nesting in Minnesota, as well as Nest and Eggs, Food, and Field Marks. Following this comes the main text in which the author displays his thorough mastery of the literature of the subject as well as the extent of his personal experience, judicious quotations being mingled with field observations in a most satisfactory way. While in the main the accounts are dignified histories of the species in Minnesota, the author not infrequently presents delightful little pen pic-

¹ Museum of Natural History. University of Minnesota | The | Birds of Minnesota | By | Thomas S. Roberts, M.D. | Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union. Professor of Ornithology and | Director of the Museum of Natural History | University of Minnesota | Illustrated with Ninety-two color plates by | Allan Brooks. George Miksch Sutton. | Walter Alois Weber. | Francis Lee Jaques | Walter John Breckenridge. Including one | plate by the late Louis Agassiz Fuertes | Volume I | [vinette] | Minneapolis | The University of Minnesota Press | London. Humphrey Milford. Oxford University Press | 1932 Pp. i-xxii + 1-691, pll. 1-49 and frontispiece figg. 1-298. Vol. II, pp. i-xv + 1-821. pll. 50-90 and frontispiece, figg. 299-606. Price for the two volumes \$6.00. There is also a limited de luxe edition numbered and signed by the author and bound in a special binding designed by William A. Kittredge; price \$25.00.

tures of the bird and its surroundings which add greatly to the enjoyment of the reader, while following each account is a well selected series of references to books and papers in which he may find additional information on the species in question. Under the ordinal and family headings, moreover, is presented much general information about the group as a whole.

The introductory chapters are very full and cover 'An Historical and Bibliographical Review of Ornithology in Minnesota' (18 pp.); 'Acknowledgements' (8 pp.); 'Geography of Minnesota' (23 pp.), including topography, forest distribution, rainfall, etc.; 'A Synopsis of Bird Life of Minnesota' (34 pp.), covering changes in the fauna, time of occurrence, migration, life zones etc.; 'Conservation' (34 pp.)—bird protection, refuges, economic ornithology, mortality among birds, disease etc.; a chapter on 'Bird Banding' by F. C. Lincoln, and 'General Comment and Explanations.'

At the close of Vol. II is a key to Minnesota birds with elaborate descriptions of all plumages (273 pp.)—really a book in itself—and a bibliography of Minnesota ornithology (58 pp.) arranged chronologically.

After a perusal of Dr. Roberts' work we find it difficult to suggest any possible features lacking in the scope which the author has planned and to which he has evidently given long and careful consideration.

The only criticism that we can offer is the unfortunate weight of the volumes due to the use of sized paper for the text, and as most of the text figures are line drawings it would seem that light weight paper might have been used.

Like most recent state bird books, colored figures of all the birds are presented on the plates with the addition, in the present instance, of male and female where their plumages differ, as well as the juvenal plumage, aberrant and molting plumages. This as always necessitates much crowding on the plates which is the despair of the bird artist. The plates are all reproduced by the offset process which permits the printing on unglazed paper and the effect is particularly pleasing, while the coloration is remarkably accurate except in a very few cases—the Savannah Sparrow, for instance, seems much too gray. Personally we prefer plates that cover the entire page rather than with a broad white margin as in the present case, but that may be a matter of individual opinion, certain it is that these plates are very beautiful.

Instead of depending upon the talent of one or two artists, Dr. Roberts has enlisted the services of a much larger staff; Allan Brooks is responsible for 36 plates; Walter A. Weber, 27; W. J. Breckenridge, 14; F. L. Jacques, 8; George M. Sutton, 4; and the late Louis Agassiz Fuertes, 1. This has great advantage in presenting variety of treatment but since each artist has usually limited his work to special groups it is difficult to make comparisons! Major Brooks' long experience has taught him many points in composition and his plates of Swallows and Kinglets are particularly pleasing while the plan of presenting several individual groups on a single plate after the manner of Thorburn, which he has used in the case of the birds of prey and the wrens, is very attractive, while his ducks are, as always, beautifully

done. Jacques' herons have a Japanese quality that is original and appealing, while Breckenridge's shore birds give promise of excellent work in this field. Weber seems to have had the hardest allotment in the bulk of the passerine birds with an enormous number of figures and the necessity for much crowding. It is a pity that some method cannot be devised whereby our many excellent bird artists may portray a single species on a plate and show their real artistic ability without being forced to include so many species on a page which makes artistic treatment impossible. This is no criticism of Dr. Roberts' artists but merely a plea for the future!

Thanks to Dr. Roberts, Minnesota now has a bird book in keeping with its varied and interesting bird life and bird study and conservation throughout the state will, we feel sure, be vastly stimulated by it, while ornithologists elsewhere will have an invaluable work of reference and those who form ornithological libraries another beautiful work to place on their shelves. We congratulate Dr. Roberts upon the completion of what has been in fact, his life work and which he has carried through in spite of the constant demands for many years of a busy medical career. To the friends who have made the publication possible, ornithology is also much indebted.
—W. S.

The Birds of Louisiana.—Louisiana made famous by Audubon as a bird paradise has until now lacked a state "bird book." Mr. Stanley C. Arthur for some years director of the Wild Life Division of the Department of Conservation was known to be at work upon such a volume¹ and at the time of his severance from this position it was understood to have been nearly completed. With the remarkable political history of the state in recent years the fate of the work has been in doubt but at last it has appeared without any designation of an author, although it is stated in the introduction, by the Commissioner, that "the data has been especially gathered by Stanley C. Arthur" while in the unsigned preface he is cited as having been "particularly helpful in rendering assistance"! From other sources we learn that he was not allowed to revise the manuscript in order to bring it into accordance with the new A. O. U. 'Check-List' and was not even furnished with proof sheets.

The main text, which we take to be the work of Mr. Arthur, is excellent, presenting good descriptions of the birds and their habits with much information on their economic status—just what such a work should contain to provide educational matter for the use of the schools and the public at large. A number of excellent color plates were furnished by the National Association of Audubon Societies and the Biological Survey from their several publications while there are many text figures from these and other sources and some apparently original.

¹ State of Louisiana | Department of Conservation | Rob't S. Maestri, Commissioner | Bulletin No. 20 | *The Birds of Louisiana* | (seal) | Published by the | Department of Conservation | New Orleans Court Building | August, 1931 | [received April 1, 1932.] Pp. 1-598. Sent on receipt of 25 cents in stamps to defray postage; Dept. of Conservation, 126 N. O. Court Building, New Orleans.