

## RECENT LITERATURE.

**Sutton's 'The Birds of Southampton Island.'**—As most of our readers are aware Mr. George Miksch Sutton spent a year, 1929–1930, on Southampton at the upper end of Hudson Bay devoting his attention mainly to a study of the bird life, and the results of his work are now presented.<sup>1</sup> The itinerary, bibliography and maps are, we presume, presented in another volume, the one before us being devoted to an account of the birds with a brief historical résumé of previous explorations on the island or the adjacent waters which serves to show how very little was known of the bird life and what an untouched field the author had before him.

That he made good use of his opportunities even a cursory examination of his report will show. Under each of the sixty-five species found on Southampton he presents a detailed series of observations taken from his diaries throughout the year, arranged under spring records, annual routine and fall records, with explanations of the Eskimo names of the birds, the author's conclusions as to the status of each form, a summary of the records of other explorers and an account of the coloration of the soft parts of the specimens collected. The whole forms one of the most notable contributions that has ever been made to the ornithology of the American arctic.

The intimate accounts of the birds and their activities are delightful reading and the careful studies of migration, breeding habits, molt, etc., are an important contribution to science.

The author includes brief mention and discussion of the occurrence of species recorded by others from Southampton or adjacent regions but which he did not personally see and includes in the same way under separate headings references which, as he points out, are erroneous identifications of species that he considers elsewhere under their proper names.

Mr. Sutton makes a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the Geese. He found that two forms bred regularly on Southampton Island, the Lesser Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis leucopareia*) and Hutchins's Goose (*B. c. hutchinsi*), each with peculiar nesting habits, etc., which leads him to follow Taverner in regarding them as specifically distinct. True *B. c. canadensis* occurs also but only casually although it has been known to nest. Our author is inclined to think that such birds are mated pairs which have been blown here by storms from southwestern Hudson Bay or Baffin Island and that their presence therefor does not affect the re-

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<sup>1</sup>The Exploration of Southampton Island, Hudson Bay | By George Miksch Sutton | Sponsored by Mr. John Bonner Semple | 1929–1930 | Part II, Zoology | Section 2. The Birds of Southampton Island | By George Miksch Sutton | Mem. Carnegie Museum. Vol. XII. Part II, Sect. 2. Pittsburgh, May 31, 1932. Pp. 1–275; ppl. XI–XXIV.

lationship of the regular summer resident forms. He regrets the use of the English name "Hutchins's" for *B. c. hutchinsi*, as adopted in the new 'Check-List,' thinking that "much confusion is certain to result" because this name was formerly used for the bird now known as the "Lesser Canada Goose." However since the Latin name "*hutchinsi*" had to be transferred from one to the other it seemed better to the Committee to carry the corresponding English name along with it; such situations are provoking and confusion will result either way.

The account of the molt of the Ptarmigan, the courtship behaviour of the ducks and plover, and the nesting habits of numerous species are replete with interest. The various call notes and songs of many of the birds are represented by the syllabic method which would have been of still greater value had the accented syllables been marked.

Mr. Sutton very wisely adopts the nomenclature of the A. O. U. 'Check-List' throughout, making several suggestions in foot notes where his experience causes him to differ from the conclusions of the Committee. His suggestion regarding the Canada Geese has already been mentioned, and he is doubtless right. With regard to the distribution of *Lagopus rupestris kelloggae* we wonder whether he has consulted Taverner's paper on these birds. As to his suggestion that the name "Herring Gull" should be "American Herring Gull" in order to distinguish it from the European bird, the Committee realized that to carry out this plan consistently "American" would have to be added to so many names that it was impracticable. We have our Herring Gull and Redstart and the English have theirs; we have our Catbird and the Australians have theirs etc. and "American" has been used in the 'Check-List' only where some qualifying name was needed to distinguish the bird in question from another species that appeared in the List.

In supplementary pages of his report Mr. Sutton discusses Life Zones, Migration, Food, and Destructive Agencies. He finds Southampton to be entirely in the Arctic Zone. Of the sixty-five species and subspecies recorded, forty are summer residents; seven, residents; eight, "migrants" [= transients]; and ten accidentals. He finds the island to be on the direct line of flight of birds breeding on the Melville and Boothia Peninsulas and is convinced that many species passing to the north or northwest travel along the west shore of Hudson Bay and never touch Southampton.

The plates consist of many admirable photographs of birds and nests and three color plates from paintings by the author who is as well known as a bird artist as he is an ornithologist. One is devoted to beautiful sketches of the downy young of various species and the others to habitat paintings of the Rock Ptarmigan, White Gyrfalcon, Brant and Blue Goose.

We congratulate Mr. Sutton upon a well conceived expedition successfully carried out, and upon an excellent report, and Mr. Semple upon his support of such a worthy enterprise.—W. S.