

RECENT LITERATURE.

Mathews on the Birds of Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands and New Zealand.

—Some years after the completion of his 'Birds of Australia' Mr. Mathews published a volume uniform in every way with that great work but dealing with the birds of Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands. As a matter of fact it also contained much supplementary matter on the birds of Australia and was in many respects a supplement to this large work. Now there appears another volume entitled a 'Supplement'¹ to the last publication and containing also such of the birds of New Zealand as were not figured by Buller. This too is uniform with the 'Birds of Australia' and contains much supplementary matter on the birds of that continent, so that both of these volumes really belong to the same series and should form part of any complete set. With this publication, Mr. Mathews writes us, that he "says farewell to Australian birds having fulfilled my claim to figure every species in the Australian list and my thirty years constant work on this region is completed." He is now, by the way, busy on his monograph of the Petrels.

The supplement proper covers twelve pages and nine plates (with an additional figure on Plate 83 of the New Zealand section). Two of these are colored plates representing the extinct White Porphyrio and the Gray-headed Blackbird, the others are reproductions of drawings of generic characters. Then follows 'Additions to 'The Birds of Australia' covering fifty-eight pages and twenty plates, nineteen of the latter are colored plates and one a half-tone of two of the Lambert drawings upon which some of Latham's species were based. The text consists of all sorts of additional matter relating to species contained in the original work.

Part two of the volume consists of the supplement to Buller's 'Birds of New Zealand' with 165 pages of text and twenty-eight plates (counting here the one containing a Norfolk Island figure mentioned above). Among the interesting species here figured is the Campbell Island Duck (*Xenonetta nesiotis* Fleming), the original of which Mr. Fleming kindly showed to many of us at the last meeting of the A. O. U. at Toronto. The colored plate is from a painting by T. M. Shortt. We note that on the plate the generic name appears *Zenonetta* thereby adding a synonym to an extinct genus. Incidentally it might be mentioned that there are colored plates of the Red and Northern Phalarope, the Pectoral Sandpiper, Hudsonian Godwit and Arctic Tern, all birds of the North American list which reach New Zealand in their migrations.

When he had completed the twelfth volume of his great work on the 'Birds of Australia' we had occasion to congratulate Mr. Mathews and to express our appreciation of the splendid contribution that he had made to the ornithology of the Antipodes and we can do no more than refer our readers to that review (*Auk*, 1927, p. 435). We should again emphasize, however, that this and the immediately preceding volume are definitely a continuation of that work and no set is complete without them even if, for publisher's reasons, a separate title had to be used.—W. S.

Ardley on the Birds of the South Orkney Islands.²—During January 1933, the Royal Research Ship, 'Discovery II,' was engaged in a hydrographic survey of

¹ A Supplement | to the | Birds | of | Norfolk & Lord Howe Islands | to which is added those | Birds of New Zealand | not figured by Buller | by | Gregory M. Mathews | Author of "The Birds of Australia" | With Hand-coloured and Monochrome Plates | H. F. & G. Witherby, Ltd. | 326 High Holborn, London | 15th. July 1936. Pp. i-xiv + 1-177. Price £8. 8s.

² The Birds of the South Orkney Islands, by R. A. B. Ardley, R. N. R. Discovery Reports, vol. XII, pp. 349-376, plates X-XII, Cambridge, 1936.

the South Orkney Islands. In February she made a second brief visit to Coronation Island of the group. Mr. Ardley, of the expedition party, made the most of these periods, despite pressure of other work, and has given us the first general account of South Orkney birds since the observations of the 'Scotia' party, which were published in 1906.

Twenty-one species are discussed, six of these being illustrated by reproductions of extraordinarily fine photographs. Two or three of the birds are, however, included upon what seem doubtful data, and the listing of *Sterna hirundinacea*, which appears to be associated with the South Orkneys only as a result of misidentification, shows how tenacious is tradition.

In his excellent notes on Penguins, the author is incorrect in doubting that *Eudyptes chrysolophus* is a breeding bird at the South Orkneys, for Larsen long ago discovered colonies at one or more of the islets. His field notes confirm current opinion regarding the extraordinary pugnacity of the Ringed Penguin, which does not tolerate even the Sheathbill near its nest. Ardley estimates the mortality of young Adélie Penguins to amount to 50 per cent; Giant Petrels and Sheathbills, he notes, were never seen to attack a healthy Penguin chick, an important comment with reference to the beneficent role of predators in maintaining the vigor of an animal population. Not a single weakling young Penguin on the other hand, has the slightest chance of survival. Other observations on Penguins include a detailed description of the swimming technique of the Adélie, and notes on specific (as distinct from seasonal) differences in the color of the excreta, doubtless resulting from small divergences in diet.

The accounts of the resident Petrels are equally entertaining and significant. Among breeding Giant Fulmars about 10 per cent of the population is made up of white birds, the proportion being considerably higher among downy young. Ardley errs in inferring that the china-blue iris of some of the South Orkney adults has not been observed at South Georgia. He found that the Cape Pigeon and other cliff-dwelling Petrels never occupy exposed southward-facing precipices, on which the coldest snow-bearing winds strike. Notable among the discoveries of the expedition is the fact that the South Orkneys are the West Antarctic headquarters of *Priocella antarctica*. Hitherto this Petrel had been merely assumed to breed at this group, but Ardley reports a total of not less than half a million nests at the Inaccessible Islets, off the western end of the archipelago. The downy plumage and flesh colors of the nestling of this species are for the first time adequately described.

The climatic disadvantages at the South Orkneys for such birds as *Pachyptila desolata* and Wilson's Petrel, which nest more successfully in the milder environment of South Georgia, are pointed out with emphasis, both of these species having to overcome an enormous mortality rate of the young. The biography of Wilson's Petrel is highly specific and useful in its description of the regularity in the date of annual return to the islands, the relatively great length and irregularity of the breeding season, and the courtship of this small Petrel in the open.

The true South Polar Skua (*macormicki*) is no more than a straggler to the South Orkneys, as indicated by the 'Discovery' investigations as well as earlier accounts. Ardley regards it as highly improbable that the low Antarctic form of the Skua (*lönnerbergi*), which is the common resident sub-species, lives a pelagic life during the winter, when it is absent from the breeding grounds. The reviewer believes this to be a scarcely warranted assumption. Skuas are common on the high sea in sub-antarctic latitudes during the winter, and all of the northern hemisphere representatives of the family are almost exclusively pelagic during the non-breeding season.

With reference to the Antarctic Tern (*Sterna vittata*)—the only breeding tern of the South Orkneys, since *Sterna hirundinacea* is confined to South American littoral waters—it seems that the author has used the subspecific name *georgiae* somewhat rashly. He states that only one specimen was collected; no measurements are given, and there is no indication that a comparison has been made with South Georgian examples, which are at least likely to prove to be endemic at that single island.

The final life history gives us the first definite and objective description of courtship, or connubial behavior, of the Sheathbill. Ardley's observations lead, also, to the conclusion that the rather extensive migrations of this curious bird are made without any ingestion of food during its flights from land to land.

This contribution, added to Matthews's account of the birds of South Georgia, Hamilton's study of the sub-antarctic Skuas, etc., gives ornithology a high place in the notable 'Discovery Reports,' which have now reached 13 volumes.—ROBERT CUSHMAN MURPHY, *American Museum of Natural History*.

Sutton's 'Birds in the Wilderness.'—Those who have read Dr. Sutton's 'Eskimo Year' are aware of his ability to write entertainingly of his experiences and they will find a wealth of good reading and personal anecdotes as well as much ornithology in the interesting book¹ that he now offers to the public. He begins with a brief account of his own early life—in Nebraska, Minnesota, Oregon, Illinois, Texas and West Virginia, and the circumstances which led his ornithological career. Then follows a delightful chapter on Louis Agassiz Fuertes who gave him instruction and inspiration in his bird painting—a field in which the student has certainly realized the hopes of his teacher! Other chapters describe the author's many trips in search of bird lore to James Bay, Labrador, British Columbia, Churchill, Oklahoma, southern Florida and interior Louisiana, with sketches of the habits and personalities of familiar birds nearer home. The Turkey Vulture, Blue Goose, Roadrunner, Chimney Swallow are among the numerous species of which the author writes sympathetically, while he also tells us of many bird pets, notably Owls and Ravens. Poe, he considers, was no ornithologist and *his* Raven was "a monster, a fiend, and a hybrid creature of blasted soul."

Dr. Sutton tells us that "ornithologists are not good conversationalists. They do not care to talk about anything but birds; and when they talk they must needs continually toss off such formidable terms as 'pileated,' 'semipalmated,' 'flamulated,' etc.," but in his little book he proves the error of his statement, for one finds much of interest in 'Birds in the Wilderness' that is not ornithology and the ornithology is presented in a way that everyone can understand and enjoy. There are twelve illustrations by the author, of which several are in color, while several others illustrate juvenal plumages in depicting which Dr. Sutton excels. We heartily recommend 'Birds in the Wilderness' to all who love wild life and experiences afield.—W. S.

Peattie's 'Green Laurels.'—When one looks over the "Contents" of this notable book² he infers that it is a series of biographies of naturalists but he soon finds that it is far more than that. As the author himself says: "I am telling about the great naturalists not simply from a biographical point of view; these men are the

¹ Birds in the Wilderness | Adventures of an Ornithologist | By George Miksch Sutton Illustrated | by the author, with pencil drawings | and field-sketches in color made | from living or freshly killed birds | . New York | The Macmillan Company | 1936. Pp. 1-xiv + 1-200. Price \$3.50.

² Green Laurels | The Lives and Achievements | of the | Great Naturalists | Donald Culross Peattie | Author of "Singing in the Wilderness" | and "An Almanac for Moderns" | Simon and Schuster, 386 Fourth Ave., New York 1936. Pp. i-xxiii + 1-368. Price \$3.75.