

RECENT LITERATURE

'Familiar Hawaiian Birds,' its author, J. d'Arcy Northwood, says, "has been written in the hope of helping those interested to identify birds likely to be seen in the Hawaiian Islands." It is illustrated with water color sketches by Keichi Kimura.¹

Any information we receive about the birds of the Hawaiian Islands is always welcome, and Mr. Northwood gives us some first-hand news of *Hemignathus ellisianus*, a bird which ornithologists had thought extinct, and of other less rare species. A slight correction might perhaps here be made. Mr. Northwood says (pp. vii, viii), "It [*H. ellisianus*] has not been reported since 1888 . . . and only one specimen of it, which is in the Museum of Berlin, exists." Actually, there are three specimens, one in Berlin and two in Leyden; these were collected by Herr Deppe in 1834.

There are several local records which have not appeared in print. The Wedge-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus pacificus cuneatus*) and the Red-footed Booby (*Sula sula rubripes*) are reported to be breeding on the small islands off the windward coast of Oahu, and some migrant ducks are also reported from that island.

Mr. Northwood has chosen seventy birds, both native and introduced species. These are listed under their English and Hawaiian names, with a short description and some notes. Scientific names with corresponding numbers appear in an appendix; these are apparently extracted from an unpublished list by E. H. Bryan, Jr. The rarer indigenous mountain forms such as *Pseudonestor xanthophrys* which may still be found on Maui, and *Psittacirostra psittacea*, which may still be found on Hawaii and other islands, are omitted. Indeed, only six Drepanidae are mentioned.

"Much of my information on the birds of the other islands," Mr. Northwood says, "comes from correspondence, since my residence has been confined chiefly to Oahu." Even so, it is a sad commentary that of the seventy familiar birds he lists, thirty are introduced species. In writing of the causes of the extirpation of native birds (p. xii) he says, "One of the most important . . . was the introduction of bird diseases." Yet we learn that "exotics" are still being imported.—J. C. GREENWAY, JR.

Mrs. Govan's 'Wings at my Window.'—What small events may completely change the current of our lives! In this little volume we learn how the sight of a small blithe Chickadee appearing on her piazza rail in the midst of a winter snowstorm brought new courage and inspiration to a disheartened invalid at a crucial time of stress; how the companionship and daily care of the many birds that later came to bird-shelf, feeding boxes and water pans, developed into an absorbing interest and pleasure; how, through forgetting her own discomfort, she overcame physical distress and at length regained normal health; how she became an ardent bird-bander and felt the thrill of welcoming in succeeding years her bird friends with their numbered bracelets; and how at last she was able to establish a permanent sanctuary for birds near her Lexington home. In all this, the author's enthusiasm is contagious; she takes the reader frankly into her confidence, so that we come to know not only her birds but the whole family as well, and like them!

Many interesting observations on habits are recounted and there are excellent directions for preparing attractive bird foods. Of course, the 'cold scientist' will criticize the humanizing of the birds and the interpretation of their actions as at times 'anthropomorphic,' nevertheless he will scarcely deny that birds do have

¹ Northwood, J. d'Arcy. Familiar / Hawaiian Birds / roy. 8vo, xiii + 63 pp., 12 pls., 1940; Thomas Nickerson, Honolulu. Edition limited to 330 copies.

personality. And perhaps one who in the course of a single year strews over six-hundred pounds of special food for the wild-bird visitors she loves, is entitled to regard them with motherly affection. Thus in our more sober pursuit of facts and their meaning, we learn that aesthetic values too are precious and that 'the charm of birds' may prove healing to the soul.

In this bright narrative,¹ running over with enthusiasm, the author can hardly fail of her purpose—to impart to others, old and young, some measure of her own delight in the observation and companionship of these fellow creatures.—G. M. ALLEN.

Babson's 'Modern Wilderness.'—The Spanish have a saying: 'If you do not get what you like, you must like what you get.' Hence, if there are no longer unexplored frontiers near our crowded eastern cities, we may, as Dr. Chapman points out in his 'Foreword,' still find recreation and thrills of discovery in the more commonplace forms of wildlife still surviving near at hand.

In this very readable volume² the author introduces us to an attractive swamp region near the Passaic River, New Jersey, where year by year, since boyhood, he and his companions have canoed, hunted for ducks, searched for nests of Barn and Great Horned Owls, fished for snapping turtles, sought for migrating birds and chatted with trapper Jean. Added to the descriptions of these varied experiences are occasional reflections of a philosophic sort and laments on the destructiveness of man. One is reminded of another writer, Charles C. Abbott, who half a century ago, wrote in similar vein of his 'Wasteland Wanderings' and other natural-history adventures in the country about Trenton, New Jersey.

Though the author gives us little in the nature of contributions to natural history, nevertheless this record of his own pleasurable experiences cannot fail to strike a responsive chord in the hearts of others who find helpful recreation in the observation and photography of birds and other wildlife. The many photographs of owls, old and young, the nesting hawks, ducks, woodcock and others, reveal the unexpected resources of an unspoiled natural area within sight of swarming traffic. This is a book that will be enjoyed by amateur naturalists old and young.—G. M. ALLEN.

Rorimer's 'Field Key to our Common Birds.'—One's first thought on picking up this little volume³ is "What! Another field guide!" Yet it has many good points and several unusual features. It is designed to help the amateur in identifying the common eastern species, especially in the region of northern Ohio. The index to illustrations and descriptions comes first instead of last, a convenience perhaps in quick handling; there is no table of contents but we start directly with an outline of the plan of the book and how to use it; the birds are grouped first according to habitats and sizes; then follows a 'Field Key' in which under each type of habitat a dichotomous key to the species occurring in it is given based mainly on size and color characters. This method, though instructive and interesting, is naturally full of pitfalls. Various sketches occur in the text and eighteen plates by Peterson, some in color, illustrate in semi-diagrammatic poses most of the species mentioned

¹ Govan, Ada Clapham. *Wings / at my Window / Illustrated by Dorothy Bayley.* 8vo, xiv + 198 pp., Oct. 1940; The Macmillan Co., New York City. Price \$2.50.

² Babson, William Arthur. *Modern Wilderness.* With a Foreword by Dr. Frank M. Chapman. 8vo, xix + 261 pp., illustr., 1940; Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., 14 West 49th St., New York City. Price \$3.00.

³ Rorimer, Irene T. *A Field Key to our Common Birds.* Illustrated by Roger Tory Peterson. 16mo, 160 pp., 18 pls., Nov. 1940; Pocket Nat. Hist., no. 8, zool. ser., no. 3, The Cleveland Mus. Nat. Hist. \$1.50.

in the text. It is too bad that those illustrating some of the thrushes, vireos and flycatchers might not have been colored too, since the differential points are not very evident in small black and white figures. The latter part of the book consists of more detailed though brief descriptions of the birds arranged in systematic order with English and Latin names. The flexible green covers, the pocket size, and the simple method of treatment should make this a guide that will appeal widely to those interested in identifying the common birds about them. It forms the eighth of the 'Pocket Natural History' series issued by the Cleveland Museum of Natural History to encourage an intelligent interest in the local fauna, flora, geology and archaeology.—G. M. ALLEN.

Salomonsen on Moults of the Rock Ptarmigan.—In this elaborate monograph¹ the author presents a minute study of the process of moult during the cycle from dark summer to white winter plumage in the Rock Ptarmigan, *Lagopus mutus*, and its races as deduced from nearly 1300 skins representing the range from Scotland to Northeast Greenland and Spitsbergen. As the late Jonathan Dwight, Jr., long ago pointed out, the matter is complicated by the fact that in spring and autumn the birds show for a time an intermediate condition, the 'tutelar' plumage. Salomonsen not only corroborates his account, but shows further that actually a new plumage is developed three times during the year. Thus the autumn moult results in the production of new dark feathers and corresponds to the complete annual moult characteristic of most birds. These dark feathers are succeeded by the pure white winter plumage, which is additionally thick through the coming in of a greater number of all-white feathers. In spring there is a third moult which, however, is incomplete and does not involve all the flight feathers. The white plumage is therefore a third or supplementary plumage. It is shown that the testis hormone does not provide the stimulus for the spring moult for this may take place much later than the initiation of courtship activity and turgidity of the red eye-wattle which are clearly controlled by this hormone. The author believes that the controlling factors initiating moult are temperature and the thyroid hormone. However, the action of the latter is still imperfectly known, and it is hard to see why its presence in autumn and reduction in spring should both act as stimulators; nor does the action of light or its reduction seem to have been taken into account, with the waning or the waxing seasons. The weak spot in the paper is that no experimental work under controlled conditions seems to have been undertaken. Nevertheless the process of moult is here very thoroughly mapped and will offer a basis for further study of the physiological processes involved.—G. M. ALLEN.

Campbell's 'Birds of Lucas County' provides an excellent summary of the bird life of this northernmost county of Ohio and is the result of the author's own intensive work in that area during the last fifteen years or so. The region is one of particular interest not only because of the diversity of habitats found in a relatively flat country, but also because it covers a transition from the more typical eastern coastal to the beginning of the western prairie fauna. On its eastern borders is Lake Erie, bringing in many waterbirds, especially those using the Mississippi Valley 'flyway'; agriculture has resulted in an alteration of the original tree cover, except in certain areas where, as in the 'oak openings,' the unproductive nature of the soil has caused these to remain largely uncleared. The wet prairies afford

¹ Salomonsen, Finn. Moults and sequence of plumages in the Rock Ptarmigan (*Lagopus mutus* (Montin)). Videnskabelige Meddelelser fra Danske Naturhist. Forening, Copenhagen, vol. 103, 491 pp., 57 figs., 5 folding graphs, 1939.

breeding ground for a limited number of species while others, such as the Lark Sparrow, are found in bare sand dunes. These various conditions are briefly described in opening chapters and there is a valuable history of the avifauna, so far as it can be pieced together, with an account of the many changes due to settlement and clearing, and the introduction of alien species. The Wild Turkey was last seen in 1892; the Eastern Prairie Chicken persisted hardly a decade longer, and even the Ruffed Grouse was extirpated by 1905; the Sandhill Crane, once a breeding bird, was gone by about 1913. Other aspects of change are interesting: Golden Plover are slowly increasing; but Wood Ducks very little, perhaps on account of the lack of suitable nesting places. The Arkansas Flycatcher has nested in the county once of recent years, but the Sycamore and the Hooded Warblers have nearly disappeared on account of timber destruction. The wide fluctuations in numbers of the Dickcissel indicate that special study is needed to fathom the causes.

Altogether this is an unusually well prepared and carefully considered local list,¹ which with its appended migration tables should help to arouse more interest in the birds of the region. There is no bibliography, but this is perhaps because of the small amount of pertinent literature. One may protest, however, against the frequent use of 'data' as a singular noun; also, the term 'summer visitor' might better be used for the American and Snowy Egrets, and Little Blue Heron which invade the county at that season, rather than 'summer resident,' which ordinarily implies breeding status.—G. M. ALLEN.

Miss Trimble's 'Changes in Bird Life at Pymatuning Lake' is a well-written paper² of unusual importance in that it affords a summary of changes that have taken place over a period of years during which Pymatuning Swamp has been converted by human agency into a reservoir lake. Before its waters were dammed, the flora and avifauna of the area had been carefully studied so that a nearly complete picture of the former conditions is available for comparison with that resulting from the change. Part of the swamp lay in eastern Ohio and a larger part in western Pennsylvania, forming a great horseshoe some sixteen miles in length, covering about twenty-five square miles. Geologically it was a large post-glacial lake which, in the centuries since the retreat of the ice, has gradually become occluded by a succession of vegetal types growing outward from the shores, to the center. In the present era it still retained a dwindling relict flora and avifauna, including a number of more boreal species, which were being slowly superseded by more southern 'Carolinian' forms.

In 1931, the main dam for the conversion of the area into a lake was begun near Jamestown, Pennsylvania, and the clearing of the old swamp forest started in 1932. It is now the largest lake in Pennsylvania, with a maximum depth of thirty-five feet.

The record of its changing bird life here given, concerns mainly the waterbirds and shorebirds, and these changes have already been great, even startling. Lying near the important Mississippi Valley migration route, "the new lake has attracted migrating water birds in great numbers" and "has become increasingly popular as breeding territory for a number of species" of which no less than twenty-one have been added over a six-year period, among them such breeding ducks as Baldpate, Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Shoveller, Red-head, Ring-necked and Ruddy Ducks. A table giving a comparison of the species occurring as migrants, stragglers, or

¹ Campbell, Louis W. 'Birds of Lucas County' [Ohio]. Bull. Toledo Mus. Sci., 1: 1-225, map, Oct. 1, 1940; published by the Toledo Zoological Soc., Toledo, Ohio.

² Trimble, Ruth. 'Changes in Bird Life at Pymatuning Lake, Pennsylvania.' Annals Carnegie Mus., Pittsburgh, 28: 83-132, pls. 8 (map) -11, Oct. 4, 1940.

breeders in 1928, with those found at the present time, summarizes these changes, while the annotated list that follows provides additional details. A bibliography of pertinent titles since Dr. Sutton's list of 1928 completes the paper.

This detailed report of faunal changes correlated with change of aquatic conditions forms an ecological record of unusual value and significance and affords a firm basis for the evaluation of future changes and for the study of adaptability in birds.—G. M. ALLEN.

PERIODICAL LITERATURE

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