

RECENT LITERATURE

Disappearing wildlife.¹—When the white man arrived in North America, he found the woods and fields teeming with animals of many sorts in an abundance unexcelled in any other part of the world. Throughout the subsequent years, one species after another has found its range restricted or its very existence threatened through causes sometimes incident to the settlement of the country but usually because of unrestricted persecution. Some of the species were driven to such reduced numbers that they were unable to survive and disappeared forever. A few of these were still present when certain far-seeing men, realizing the danger, opened campaigns to preserve the last remnants, but their efforts came too late to save all of them. The list of extirpated forms continued to lengthen, although less rapidly than before. Some of the forms were saved but are still in danger. Others have suffered from new crises and require renewed vigilance to prevent their following in the wake of their predecessors. The present volume deals with these threatened creatures.

Beginning with a general account of the trend of events that brought about the present situation, the book then takes up one species after another, discusses its habitat, appearance, and behavior, and gives something of its history in contact with its chief enemy, man, with emphasis on the factors that have brought about its present danger. Less attention is given to the species that are utterly extinct. Among the forms discussed are two birds under United States dominion in Puerto Rico and Hawaii, respectively.

The book makes very evident how efficiently and how soon the proper measures must be taken to give these remnants a chance for continued existence. It is a powerful document for conservation that will appeal to every lover of unspoiled nature and that should be read by those who are not of that fraternity.

The illustrations by Walter Weber are very pleasing and add greatly to the attractiveness of an exceedingly readable book.—JOHN T. ZIMMER.

Birds of the Americas.²—This long-awaited volume brings together, as the earlier parts have done, the pertinent references and records of the species of a number of orders of American birds which have been among those most needing attention. Cases are still numerous in which additional material must be found and studied before satisfactory conclusions can be reached, but a great step forward has been made in bringing these cases to attention as well as in arranging all the known American forms in order. The value of the foundations here laid in place will be best appreciated by workers who have had occasion to work in the groups included in this account but they will be apparent to all students of American birds.

The authors disclaim any intention of writing a monograph of the groups discussed, but the copious critical notes make the treatment virtually monographic

¹ 'Fading Trails.' The story of endangered American wildlife. Prepared by a committee of the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service. Daniel B. Beard, Chairman, Frederick C. Lincoln, Victor H. Cahalane, Hartley H. T. Jackson, Ben H. Thompson. Illustrated by Walter A. Weber. Edited by Charles Elliot. 8vo, xv + 279, 20 pls. (4 col.), 12 figs., 1942. The Macmillan Co. Price \$3.00.

² Hellmayr, Charles E., and Conover, Boardman. 'Catalogue of Birds of the Americas.' Part 1, Number 1. Rheidae, Tinamidae, Cracidae, Tetraonidae, Phasianidae, Numididae, Meleagrididae, Opisthocomidae, Gruidae, Aramidae, Psophiidae, Rallidae, Heliornithidae, Eurypygidae, Cariamidae, Columbidae. Field Mus. Nat. Hist., Zool. Ser., 13, pt. 1, no. 1 (Publ. 514). 8vo, vi + 636, April 30, 1942.

as has been the case in previous volumes by Dr. Hellmayr. The groups of birds in this part of the 'Catalogue' are among those which have long been the special field of Mr. Conover and his own magnificent collection of game birds has furnished the largest part of the critical material examined in this connection. His studies of these and other specimens in this country and Dr. Hellmayr's familiarity with the European collections, some of which have been available for re-examination, have placed an unusual amount of material at the authors' critical disposal.

The general trend of the adopted arrangement is in the direction of consolidation of genera and species, a trend with which the reviewer is in full sympathy. Synonymies are carried to December 31, 1939, with occasional reference to more recently described forms. *Penelope dabbenei* is proposed as a new name for *P. nigrifrons* Dabbene (not of Lesson).—JOHN T. ZIMMER.

Experiences with birds.¹—In spite of Mrs. Jaques's disavowal of any inborn interest in birds, it is obvious that she now has a truly sympathetic affection for them, cultivated though it may have been. Her latest book gives a running narrative of her travels with her artist-ornithologist husband in his search for background studies for museum habitat groups, in vacation excursions, and in simpler countryside walks—travels that took them into the lake region of Minnesota, the swamps of Arkansas, and the rocks of the Gaspé Peninsula, to the New Forest of southern England, the mountains of Switzerland, and the tropical forest of Barro Colorado Island in the Panamá Canal Zone. Everywhere there were birds, strange ones whose acquaintance was to be made or familiar ones whose appearance in new surroundings aroused pleasant recollections. And always there were new experiences, new places, and new friends, human as well as feathered. Mrs. Jaques treats all of them alike, with a spontaneity and a lightness of touch that is refreshing.

No attempt is made at any technical discussion and yet there is much sound observation on bird life ably, if casually, brought to light. There is not a page of out-of-doors experiences that does not radiate the freedom of wood, field, sea-shore, or sky as seen through the author's appreciative eye.

Mr. Jaques's illustrations are charming studies in black-and-white that give a feeling of color and carry the same breath of outdoors that is found in the accompanying text.—JOHN T. ZIMMER.

Stuart Baker on cuckoo problems.²—When a man has been interested in a problem over a period of many years and has had opportunities rarely equalled both for acquiring pertinent data and material, and for coming to grips with the various aspects of his subject, his final summing up of his information and his interpretations of it, can hardly fail to be of the greatest interest to his fellow workers. According to Poulton's foreword to Baker's book, the author has a collection containing about 6000 cuckoos' eggs, and has had ". . . the advantage of some 70 years' personal study of cuckoos and their life-histories . . ." and that the present volume contains, ". . . the result of that study, intimately combined with the work done by previous writers in many countries." With this in mind let us proceed to a consideration of the book itself and see what Baker has been able to extract from this unusually fortunate combination of large experience, much material, and more than ample time.

¹ Jaques, Florence Page. 'Birds across the Sky.' Illustrations by Francis Lee Jaques. 8vo, xii + 240, 25 illustr. Harper and Brothers. New York and London. Price \$2.50.

² Baker, E. C. Stuart. 'Cuckoo Problems.' H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd., London, 8vo, pp. xvi + 207, 12 plates, 1942. Price 25 shillings.

To begin with the materials Baker has collected; a series of appendices (pp. 181-207) gives in simple, almost tabular form the amazingly long lists of cuckoos' eggs with fosterers' in his collection, arranged by each species and subspecies of cuckoo, some 38 forms of which are included. For the Common Cuckoo, *Cuculus canorus canorus*, some 80 fosterers are listed involving no fewer than 1501 eggs of the cuckoo; of the Khasia Hills Cuckoo, *Cuculus canorus bakeri*, the number of fosterers included in the collection is 127 with 2117 eggs of the cuckoo; of other forms smaller but still significantly large series are mentioned. All in all, these lists are valuable source material for interpretative reasoning, but their value resides in the degree to which their reliability may be trusted. In this connection we may quote Baker's comments on the assistants who helped him in his work in India. "Most of these have been amateurs, but keen and capable observers, employed in our Indian and Colonial services or men in the Army and Navy. My paid collectors . . . have in every case sent the skins of the parent birds with the eggs taken. Otherwise I have not accepted them as beyond doubt. My Indian collectors have been four Khasias . . . Nagas or other Hill tribesmen, and trustworthy beyond all doubt . . . I emphasize this as it has often been said that Indians are not to be trusted implicitly in such work . . . Again it must be remembered that the wild tribes do not lie and, if the trivial offence of cutting off the heads of other people is omitted, they have no petty sins . . ." The reviewer does not doubt that Baker is entirely sincere in all this, but nevertheless he feels that the material collected under such circumstances is not of such impeccable authenticity as to constitute scientific data. Quite probably the bulk of the material is acceptable, but with no way of telling which eggs were collected by reliable persons with an understanding of what facts were important and which by natives desirous of pleasing an official of the government, it is manifestly impossible to accept the records with the same simple faith that the author is inclined to trust. The reviewer has had ample experience with well-intentioned natives in tropical areas and knows that their good intentions are very apt to outdistance their loyalty to a kind of accuracy for which they see no need. It is very unfortunate that so much material should have been collected over so long a period, most of it doubtlessly good, too, and yet be rendered open to suspicion by the inclusion of a mass of uncritically accepted specimens.

So much for the material on which the author's studies have been founded; it is not to be expected that Baker would agree with all that has been said above, but probably he would be surprised if the objections were not raised. He has satisfied himself, but this confidence cannot be transmitted to others, and is therefore not of the stuff of which evidence is built. We may now turn to the rest of the book and see what data, inferences, and conclusions Baker has been able to extract from his material. As might be expected from a man who has been primarily engaged in collecting specimens, the cuckoo problems that interested him most are cuckoo-egg problems. We find, accordingly, that the first half or more of his book is given over to a discussion of the general problem of adaptive similarity between the eggs of the cuckoos and those of their fosterers, a problem that has long been of primary interest to the author, and one on which he has published before (*Proc. Zool. Soc. London*, 1923). To state the problem simply, the known facts are these: while the individual species of cuckoos victimize many species of birds the tendency is for each individual hen cuckoo to use nests of but a single species of fosterer; the eggs laid by any one individual cuckoo are

all very similar although there may be wide variation in the eggs of each species of cuckoo; in a large number of cases there is a general (and in some cases a close) similarity between the eggs of the parasite and those of its host or fosterer. In this discussion Baker's knowledge of a good number of different species of cuckoos and their eggs enables him to avoid the partial perspectives so frequently mistaken for the whole picture by workers with geographically and systematically more limited (even though more intensive) data.

He begins with a consideration of the need for adaptive similarity between cuckoos' eggs and those of their fosterers, as without a need it would be hard indeed to explain its evolution. The main body of evidence he relies on to prove this need is a record of percentage of desertions of their nests, after cuckoos' eggs had been laid in them, by birds whose own eggs bore varying degrees of resemblance to those of the parasites in each case. Aside from the fact that there is nothing in the way of observational evidence that the nests were deserted because of the cuckoo's eggs, there is nothing definite stated by which the reader can even know that the nests were actually deserted when collected. However, even taking the material as Baker presents it, we find that the elimination of unlike eggs by desertion is as follows: of a total of 'normal' fosterers involving some 1662 cuckoos' eggs, there were 137 desertions or 8.02%; of 'abnormal' fosterers involving 278 cuckoos' eggs, 71 or 25.5% were deserted. By 'normal' is meant frequently parasitized; by 'abnormal,' the opposite. In evaluating these data we must remember that collectors are always prone to take 'unusual' sets of eggs and so the chances of the collectors' inclination to assume that desertion had taken place are greater in the 'abnormal' than in the 'normal' group. Also, taking all the eggs of all fosterers together, the total desertions are 11.2%, certainly not very greatly different from that of the 'normal' group alone. Baker is too inclined to 'explain away' exceptions to his idea; thus, while he is apparently aware of the fact that while the Black-headed Shrikes are commonly victimized, their desertions total as high as 35.30%, but this he writes is due to factors in the habits of the host rather than to lack of adaptation in the eggs of the cuckoo. We may be pardoned if we ask why should a lesser percentage of desertions be a selective factor in the evolution of adaptive similarity in cuckoos' eggs (by gradually eliminating the non-similar egg-layers), while a higher percentage of desertions seems to have had no such effect on the numerical status of those cuckoos that parasitize the Black-headed Shrike. Also, he finds that in the British Isles there is relatively little adaptive similarity between the eggs of *Cuculus canorus canorus* and those of its fosterers while on the European continent the similarity is much greater (with the same hosts in many cases). This he explains as due to the assumed probability that the cuckoo is a recent addition to the British avifauna and that sufficient time has not elapsed for the adaptive resemblance to be brought about. But if this be so, are we to believe that the cuckoos settling in Britain came from elsewhere than the European continent and failed to bring with them the more perfectly adaptive egg colorings they had there?

Similarly Baker's data on elimination of unlike eggs by ejection are open to question. When a host ejects a cuckoo's egg from its nest, it may be because it senses an unfamiliar and therefore disturbing object in the nest, but when the same bird frequently accepts and incubates the cuckoos' eggs are we to attach more importance to the occasions of rejection than of retention? So many factors may influence the behavior of the host on its return to the nest that it is dangerous

to fall back on too simple an explanation. It is apparently well established that certain species eject cuckoos' eggs far more frequently than others, but would they not treat any foreign bodies in the same way? (In the case of the North American Yellow Warbler, Cowbird eggs are often buried by the building of a new floor to the nest over them. However, the warblers were found to treat acorns in the same way.)

It cannot be denied, however, that while to some extent, in some species of cuckoos, the adaptive resemblance of eggs to those of the common hosts, is not too well established, there is nevertheless something valid in it, while in others the similarity is too great and consistent to be purely coincidental. In bringing his vast material to bear on the exposition of these cases Baker makes his most notable contribution to our knowledge of cuckoos. In attempting to explain the development of this adaptive similarity, Baker, like many other workers, inclines to the idea that each species of cuckoo is composed of many 'gens' each of which is specific in its parasitism on a single fosterer species and that each individual is true to its 'gens' in its choice of hosts. While there is a great deal to be said for the 'gens' concept, it should always be remembered that it is only an hypothesized idea, and not an established fact. As long as it helps to define and clarify the problems that cuckoos present to the investigator it is worth while, but we are all too prone to fall back on a convenient concept with such a feeling of relief that we forget to remember its factual status.

The other cuckoo-egg problem that Baker discusses in detail is the manner in which the egg is placed in the nest. While admitting that the work of Chance and his followers has clearly shown that *Cuculus canorus* lays directly into the nest, even in cases where the nest is doomed and the opening small, Baker still clings to the idea that some cuckoos may at times lay their eggs on the ground and then project them into the nest. In support of this he cites observations of Livesey and others on Burmese and Indian cuckoos, all of which leave something to be desired in the way of completeness, although of very definite suggestive value. The reviewer should state at this point that he may be unconsciously biased and expect too much in the way of proof, but he is not convinced that cuckoos ever regularly use this method of getting their eggs into the nests.

Other cuckoo problems such as the matter of territory, the number of eggs laid and any subsequent interest in them on the part of the layer, are dealt with more briefly as they are relatively outside the author's main interest and are based largely on inconclusive data. These chapters, like the rest of the book, are of interest to special students, who are competent to extract the wheat from the chaff, but are of lesser importance for the general reader.

It is interesting to note, in conclusion, that the old notion that cuckoos carry their eggs in their bills and place them in nests into which they cannot otherwise enter is hardly mentioned but merely hinted at as a not yet entirely disproved possibility.

Eight colored plates of eggs and four black and white plates of birds and nests serve to illustrate this compactly written and well printed book. The lack of an index is a drawback but not great enough to make the book difficult to use. In spite of all the points in which the present reviewer disagrees with the author, the book is full of interest, and should be consulted by anyone intending to study the fascinating problems presented by the cuckoos. Anyone who has done field work on these most difficult birds realizes that it is far easier to find fault with

what has been done than to find the correct answers to his questions.—HERBERT FRIEDMANN.

Birds of North Carolina.¹—In the twenty-three years since the earlier volume on 'The Birds of North Carolina' by the same authors was published (N. Car. Geol. Econ. Survey, 4: 1-380, 1919), now long out of print, much additional information has accumulated on the subject. The new book brings the account up to date and gives discussions of the occurrence and local distribution of 396 species and subspecies.

As in the former work, each form is succinctly described and in most cases figured, the general range is given as is the range within the state, and there is a varying amount of discussion of behavior, song, nesting, vernacular names, dates of record, and similar facts of interest. Species of possible but yet unrecorded occurrence within the state are noted for the benefit of future observers. The book thus makes a convenient manual for the use of local students as well as a work of reference for persons outside the state.

The illustrations comprise full-page plates in color by Bruce Horsfall and in color and black-and-white by Roger Tory Peterson and text-figures by Peterson and Rex Brasher. These form a useful adjunct to the descriptions in the text.

In the main, the adopted arrangement follows the fourth edition of the A. O. U. Check-List but includes a few subspecies described subsequently to that list while discarding other novelties of whose validity the authors are not convinced. This may cause some confusion although the distinguishing characters of the recognized forms are given in the discussions.

The book will undoubtedly be of great service to the bird students of North Carolina who will have in a convenient form an up-to-date resumé of the pertinent information on the birds of their state.—JOHN T. ZIMMER.

Report on the Ivory-bill.²—Realizing that the time was getting short in which information could be gathered about the fast-disappearing Ivory-bill, Mr. Tanner was commissioned by the National Audubon Society to investigate the species in its present and former homes and learn what could be found about its way of life, its essential requirements, the causes of its diminishing numbers, and the possible measures to be taken to rehabilitate it. A total of some twenty-one months were spent in the field in the South and the results of the study are presented herewith.

Mr. Tanner found a probable maximum of twenty-two birds living in 1939 in Florida and Louisiana with a slight possibility of others in South Carolina. The cause of disappearance from much of the former range has been due, as has been suspected, to the destruction of the forest by unrestricted logging operations. These have left no succession of dying or recently dead trees to support the particular sorts of boring insects on which the Ivory-bill is accustomed to feed. Long-dead trees do not support the same insect populations and may furnish food for the Pileated Woodpecker but not the Ivory-bill. A relatively large area is needed to supply dying trees in sufficient quantity and selective logging pro-

¹ Pearson, Thomas Gilbert, Brimley, Clement Samuel, and Brimley, Herbert Hutchinson. 'Birds of North Carolina.' 8vo, xxxii + 416, pls. 1-37 (20 col.), 4 portrs., text-figs. 1-141, 1942. State Museum Division, N. Car. Dept. Agr., Raleigh. Price \$3.50.

² Tanner, James T. 'The Ivory-billed Woodpecker.' Research Report No. 1 of the National Audubon Society. Imper. 8vo, xii + 111, frontisp. (col.), pls. 1-20, figs. 1-22. New York, October, 1942. Price \$2.50.

cedure or an adequate stand of untouched woodland is a necessary part of any program designed to save the Ivory-bill from extinction.

Maps are given showing original and present ranges and details are given of the data on which these maps are based. There are chapters on habitat, population density and range, food and feeding habits, behavior, nesting, and other topics. Some nesting failures were found, due to destruction of nests by unknown enemies and once because of infertile eggs. The species has a long breeding season and lack of synchronization of the sex-cycles of individuals of opposite sexes is mentioned as a possible factor likely to be effective in a reduced population.

A colored frontispiece by George M. Sutton and numerous photographs and line drawings illustrate the brochure which makes a most interesting and informative report. It is hoped that it will spur the effort so that effective measures may be taken to preserve the last remnants of this magnificent bird.—JOHN T. ZIMMER.

Labrador investigation.¹—This book is an account of an expedition by the author, Assistant Curator of Ornithology, and J. K. Doult, Curator of Mammalogy of the Carnegie Museum of Pittsburgh, under the auspices of that Institution, during eight months of the year 1938, into two subarctic areas, the unorganized District of Ungava, just east of Hudson Bay on the Labrador Peninsula, and the Belcher Islands out in the Bay only 60 miles off shore. It was in part a search for Kasagea, an unknown seal, and in part a general biological survey of the Labrador Peninsula. This was one of nineteen expeditions sponsored by the Museum within the last thirty years into the Hudson Bay region, a series which began with that of 1914 by Claude J. Murie—all with the ultimate objective of a complete survey of the Labrador Peninsula. Of these surveys, fifteen were conducted under the general supervision of W. E. Clyde Todd, Director of Biology of the Museum. The present 1938 expedition combined two originally separate projects. One of these was to winter in the interior of Ungava, and the other was to spend a spring on the Belcher Islands of Tukarak. Starting from Pittsburgh soon after New Year in 1938, they proceeded by rail via Cochrane, Canada to Moosonee and Moose Factory, where they arrived at 25 degrees below zero. From there they proceeded by airplane via Fort George to Great Whale River. The months which followed were spent not only in trips on land and on ice by dog-sled and later by boat to Belcher and Sleepie Islands, but also in making numerous brief side trips en route, and in making their final return to base at Cochrane.

The material in this book relating to birds ranges from very brief mention of the distribution of certain species to considerable information pertaining to life history, habits or ecology of other species. There are discussions of varying length of such topics as the singing of American Pipits, the mating call of geese, collecting raven eggs and nests, the mating of the Purple Sandpiper, the method of construction of nests of geese, the habitual Eskimo practice of making use of greatly decayed eggs as food, Jack Miner and his bird sanctuary in Ontario, and, of especial interest, numerous bird observations made from airplane in Ungava between Moose Factory and Great Whale River port.

While the scope of this notice is limited in general to consideration of those

¹ Twomey, Arthur C., in collaboration with Nigel Herrick. 'Needle to the North: the Story of an Expedition to Ungava and the Belcher Islands.' 8vo., 560 pp., 53 illus., maps, 1942. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co. Price \$3.50.

sections of ornithological interest, it should be added that the book contains considerable material on general natural history, ranging from brief notes on *Cladocera* to discussion of life history, habits and distribution of various species of seals. There are likewise observations of ethnological interest pertaining to the various Eskimo and related people inhabiting the regions studied. Presenting their work in semi-popular style, non-technical language and in simple narrative form, the authors have been able to share with their readers full and vivid impressions of memorable days. Both are naturalists of sufficient insight to enable them to deal sympathetically with the unusual situations in which they occasionally found themselves, and to relate their experiences in such a way as to make 'easy reading' to a degree far above the average for a work of this kind. The study of this book is heartily commended.—J. S. WADE.

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