

RECENT LITERATURE

A Naturalist's Scrapbook.¹—Before his recent death, Thomas Barbour was engaged in the enjoyable task of selecting, from a lifetime of varied experiences, an assemblage of incidents and anecdotes to make a series of little volumes. The present book is the second of the series, having been preceded by his 'Naturalist at Large.'

To those of us who knew Dr. Barbour, these books have a particular interest since they are so personalized, but there is much in them that makes good reading for the general public, particularly for those persons whose interests lie in natural history.

In the present volume, the early chapters deal largely with the "Agassiz Museum," officially the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, at Cambridge, Massachusetts, with which Dr. Barbour was associated for so many years. Its origin and early history are briefly told, beginning with a collection, destroyed by fire in 1764, that was preserved in Harvard College and for which the claim is made that it was the first natural history museum in the United States. Accounts are also given of the Boston Society of Natural History and the Peabody Museum at Salem, Massachusetts, with both of which the author had an active connection. The record, therefore, embraces a variety of museum activities in the Boston region. The account frequently involves the discussion of general museum aims and practices, of exhibition and labeling, and of storage and utilization of collections, on all of which Dr. Barbour's long museum services entitled him to speak with authority. There are also many amusing anecdotes such as that of the collection of shells which had been marked 'Do not disturb' and which had been left untouched and forgotten for over eighty-five years, long after the person had gone who wrote the inscription on the boxes! A chapter on certain rare and historic birds is of special interest to ornithologists.

In the latter part of the book, Dr. Barbour gives some of his experiences while on a visit to the East Indies many years ago, and takes occasion to comment on a number of problems in natural history that these experiences brought to mind.

The title of the book is, however, well chosen. It is not a connected discourse but is made up of a series of reminiscences on a variety of topics, related to each other through their common ground of natural history and the author, and together making a readable and entertaining volume.—J. T. ZIMMER.

The Birds of Réunion.²—The history of the small but fascinating avifauna of the Mascarene Islands provides one of the most dramatic episodes of the destruction of birds by man. Réunion (first called Ile Bourbon), Mauritius (former Ile de France), and Rodriguez, isolated in the western part of the Indian Ocean to the east of Madagascar, have remained entirely unspoiled and uninhabited until their discovery by European explorers in the first years of the sixteenth century, for Réunion apparently in 1505. Undisturbed by man and mammals since their origin, the fauna of these islands had evolved under special conditions of security, producing defenseless and even flightless creatures, such as the famous Dodos. Most of them were quickly exterminated by the ruthless invaders. A little more than a century later, the largest forms had become extinct; the Réunion Dodo or "Solitaire," the last one to survive, finally disappeared around the year 1740. In Mauritius and Rodriguez, bones of the victims have been found, and their identification is therefore

¹ BARBOUR, THOMAS. 'A Naturalist's Scrapbook.' 8vo, pp. x + 218, 17 pls., 1946. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. Price \$3.00.

² BERLIOZ, JACQUES. 'Oiseaux de la Réunion.' 4to, pp. 1-83 [Faune de l'empire Français, 4, Larose, Paris], 1946.

easier and more certain. No such deposits have been found in Réunion, and the accounts of early travelers form the basis of our information, particularly those of Tatton (1625) and Du Bois (1674) are of great value, if rather difficult to understand at times.

J. Berlioz has treated the subject with his usual care and clarity. After a short introduction, his work is divided in two parts: the old avifauna of Réunion, and its present avifauna. The first and shortest part is also the most captivating as it condenses and interprets whatever knowledge has been preserved on the Dodo or Solitaire, a distinct species—apparently very different from that of Mauritius—various parrots—among which the famous *Mascarinus* is conspicuous (a good specimen exists in the Paris Museum)—the Crested Myna (*Fregilupus varius*), and other vanished treasures. The present avifauna is made up of sea birds and migrant waders, of introduced species and of some endemic forms which have preserved a foothold, some only precariously. The most interesting ones among them are the harrier (*Circus maillardi*), the swiftlet (*Collocalia francica*), the swallow (*Phedina borbonica*), the Paradise Flycatcher (*Tchitrea borbonica*), the chat (*Saxicola borbonensis*), the bulbul (*Microscelis borbonica*), the graybird (*Coquus [Coracina] newtoni*), two white-eyes (*Zosterops curvirostris haesitatus* and *Malacirops borbonicus*).

This small book is well printed on good paper, and has numerous line illustrations. It is full of precise information on a most interesting subject.—JEAN DELACOUR.

A laboratory and field manual of ornithology.¹—With the inclusion of many new sections and new illustrations, and a revision of some of the earlier sections, this edition of Pettingill's manual is ostensibly a new book. The manual was first published in 1939 and was developed while the author was teaching ornithology and directing student investigations at Carleton College and the University of Michigan Biological Station.

As stated in the preface, "the manual is designed primarily for use in ornithological study and research at the college and university level" by students who have had a college course in general zoology or biology. The manual is divided into eighteen sections which vary considerably from mere outlines of material to be learned to long, detailed, and highly organized units on various phases of ornithology. Each section, with few exceptions, includes some directions for observational studies and a bibliography.

The manual, for all practical purposes, can be divided into two parts. Part one comprises the first ten sections and includes those topics which are presented in the elementary course. These sections are studied in the laboratory prior to the spring migration and include the following subjects: topography, feathers and feather tracts, classification and nomenclature, external structural characters, laboratory identification, plumages and plumage coloration, and distribution and migration. After the spring migration begins, the class work emphasizes the recognition of birds in the field and the identification of prepared skins of the species observed. During this period, only two sections of the manual are used, those on field identification and bird ecology.

The content and presentation of the material in this part of the manual, exclusive of the sections on bird ecology and distribution and migration, are good. The sections are well organized; the directions are clearly given; the facts are accurate for the most part with only a few cases of questionable terminology; the outline drawings are

¹ PETTINGILL, OLIN SEWALL, JR. 'A Laboratory and Field Manual of Ornithology.' Pp. v + 248, Plates I-XX, numerous text-figures (Illustrations by Walter J. Breckenridge), 1946. Burgess Publ. Co., 426 South 6th Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Price \$3.50.

satisfactory, and the exercises are well adapted for laboratory study. In the opinion of the reviewer, however, an elementary course in ornithology with the content, organization and method of approach as given in this manual does not provide the best training for beginning students, whether or not they will continue in ornithology. The elementary course that is outlined above undoubtedly represents the traditional and hence most readily accepted method, but is it necessarily the best method? Why, for example, must students wait until the spring migration begins to start their field work? Why not have a regular weekly field trip of three or four hours for observing birds and taking detailed notes, especially in February and March when there are fewer species? Of what advantage is it to a beginning student to learn how to identify many birds, if he has little or no training in how to observe birds? Too many of our beginning students are overimpressed with the importance of obtaining large lists of species on field trips, and are not sufficiently cognizant of birds as organisms. The primary objective of a course in ornithology should be the study of birds as organisms and this obviously implies a biological frame of reference.

The reviewer takes issue with the excessive amount of structural detail and classification intended for the elementary course. For example, in the section on classification and nomenclature, Wetmore's classification of the birds of the world is given in full, except for the families not found in North America north of México. The student is told that he should know the names of the orders and families and their sequence! This undue emphasis on taxonomy is shown again in the section on external structural characteristics and laboratory identification. Admittedly, this material lends itself well to laboratory study, and undoubtedly will impress beginning students with the complexities of the science of ornithology. At the same time, however, it gives them a very distorted impression of the nature, content and objectives of ornithology as a branch of biology.

The emphasis on taxonomy becomes further exaggerated because of the very inadequate treatment of bird ecology, not only for the elementary course, but in the manual as a whole. For the beginning student, there are two sections with ecological material, one entitled bird ecology, the other, distribution and migration. Under distribution, the emphasis is on biotic communities with a summary of the eight major types in North America and the avian species associated with each. Under bird ecology, the biological and physical factors that affect birds are given in brief outline and adapted primarily from Kendeigh.

In the opinion of the reviewer, the presentation of the ecological material in these two sections will probably contribute to a confused attitude on the part of the student regarding the meaning of ecology, particularly as related to birds. As given in the manual, it is not clear that the concept of communities has resulted from studies in ecology, and is an integral part of it. Rather, one gets the impression that it is a separate, independent avenue of approach in ornithology. This same criticism is applicable to the sections on bird communities and bird populations in the latter part of the manual. All of this material could well have been grouped together and organized within an ecological section. Such a procedure would have avoided the inevitable confusion which results from a discussion of bird communities apart from ecology, and apart from biotic communities. Is there any basis in ecology for such a concept as the bird community? How would it differ from a biotic community? Even the adjective 'biotic' seems superfluous, for no community exists without plant and animal organisms. The weakest part of the manual is the organization and treatment of the ecological material, and perhaps some clue for this weakness may be found in these concluding statements which are found at the end of the section on

bird ecology (p. 139): "Specific problems in the study of bird ecology are complicated, exacting, and time consuming. They are, therefore, not considered appropriate for a beginning course in ornithology."

The second part of the manual consists of the last eight sections, which are used in the advanced course given at the Biological Station. Of these eight sections, only two are taken up in the field, bird communities and bird populations. These have already been considered. The remaining six sections deal with various phases in the breeding cycle and are used as a study text. At the end of each of these sections, directions are given for observations in the field, and also included are the recent and acceptable methods for the presentation of the data. The topics included in these sections are: territory; mating; nests and nest building; eggs, egg-laying and incubation; young and their development; and parental care. The material included summarizes fairly well the known information to date, and presents it in a highly organized manner. However, because of the necessary brevity in each section, and because these sections are used as text material for advance students, might it not be preferable to provide the students with the original sources? These are relatively few in number and accessible, and would have the advantage of putting the student in touch with the original investigations.

Two important questions of usage appear in these sections. The term 'mating' is used instead of 'pair formation' and is differentiated from 'copulation.' The terms 'proestrus' and 'oestrus' are applied to the breeding cycle of the female to indicate her initial unreceptive and later receptive period of response to the male. This usage is certainly regrettable, for despite the apparent similarity between the breeding cycles of some mammals and birds, the biological connotation of the oestrous cycle precludes the possibility of applying the concept to birds.

With regard to the organization of the advanced course, it seems that it is little more than a detailed study of the breeding cycle. In the opinion of the reviewer it would have been highly desirable to include text material on the origin of species, bird psychology, and recent experiments on the physiology of wild birds. Moreover, much of the material on classification and structure might well be included in the advanced course, and much of the life history material offered as text material in the beginning course.

A very useful and valuable feature of the manual is the number of bibliographies. There is one at the end of all but two of the sections, and although no attempt has been made to make them complete, they have been brought up to date, and include for the most part the significant contributions in each subject treated. In addition to these sectional bibliographies, there are four appendixes containing bibliographies of life history studies, state works on birds, bibliographies pertaining to ornithology, and books for general information and recreational reading. Included in the appropriate bibliographies are the masters and doctoral theses at Cornell University and the University of Michigan, but not at other institutions. References to foreign literature are too few throughout the manual especially for the important contributions, and since the manual is intended in part as a guide for research at the college level this is an unfortunate omission. Groebbel's two-volume treatise on the bird is not mentioned at all, and Stresemann's excellent monograph on Aves is mentioned only in the bibliography on nests and nest-building. This lack of consideration for such classic contributions to ornithology is indeed surprising.

In addition to the four appendixes mentioned, there is one on ornithological field methods, which includes a section on bird weights that is in need of revision; another on the preparation of a paper; and a concluding one on current North American

ornithological journals. Listed in this last appendix are 22 journals besides the four prominent ones! It seems incongruous to see so much space provided for so many small American journals, and no mention of the significant foreign journals.

The manual is printed in photo offset, is attractive in appearance, and has a convenient spiral binding. Enhancing greatly the appearance of the book are the illustrations by Walter J. Breckenridge. The book has been well edited, and there are few typographical errors. A curious omission is the figures for plate IV.

Those who agree with the plan and content of the manual for elementary and advanced courses in ornithology will find it well suited to their needs. For others, the manual is recommended for its comprehensive and useful treatment of the structure and classification of North American birds, and for its concise summaries of the phases of the breeding cycle.—ALBERT WOLFSON.

Catalogue of Argentine birds.¹—It is pleasing to see another instalment of this important work which was begun in 1935 (see *Auk*, 53: 355, 1936) and of which the preceding part appeared in 1939. The present portion concludes the parrots and takes up the cuckoos, owls, goatsuckers, swifts, hummingbirds, trogons, kingfishers, and motmots.

As in preceding parts of the work, there are critical notes on many of the forms, with extended bibliographies for all of them, lists of specimens examined, and statements of the geographic distribution, extralimital as well as Argentine. The result, therefore, is considerably more than a simple catalogue of species and subspecies but brings up to date, for the groups treated, the authors' conclusions concerning the status of the various forms known or recorded from Argentina.

The future instalments of the work will be awaited with interest.—J. T. ZIMMER.

Birds of Sonora, México.²—This is the most comprehensive paper on Mexican ornithology that has appeared for some time. No less than 532 species and subspecies are recognized by van Rossem from Sonora and 37 have been reported from the state on evidence which van Rossem finds questionable. There have been 111 forms described from Sonoran specimens of which ten are considered synonyms of other forms and one a hybrid. How many of the total list are true endemics and how many are seasonal visitants is not told, which would be a matter of more than academic interest. Sixty-eight collectors are named as having been active in the collection of Sonoran birds in addition to one whose name is not known.

The author recognizes five avifaunal "provinces"—the Sonoran, Sinaloan, Apachian, Durangan, and San Lucan, with the addition of the off-shore maritime element for which a distinctive name is postponed. Each of these areas is briefly characterized and delimited with a general map showing the positions, and a gazetteer of collecting localities within the state forms a useful adjunct, as do the various maps showing the distribution of certain of the species.

Most of the text is devoted to a discussion of the Sonoran distribution of the various forms, accompanied by the bibliographic references to the pertinent records and such unpublished records as are known to the author. In some of the cases where further comments are needed or a change in the author's previous conclusions have been made, there is a brief review of the evidence in support of the stand taken in the text.

Two new subspecies are described: *Icterus bullockii parvus*, with Jacumba, San

¹ [STULLET, ALFREDO B., AND DEAUTIER, ENRIQUE A.] 'Obra de Cincuentario del Museo de La Plata. [Catálogo Sistemático de las Aves de la República Argentina].' Tomo 1, Cuarta Entrega, pp. 733-932, 1945. Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Instituto del Museo.

² VAN ROSSEM, A. J. 'A distributional survey of the birds of Sonora, México.' *Occ. Pap. Mus. Zool. Louisiana State Univ.*, No. 21: 1-379, maps 1-26 (1 col.), Oct. 25, 1945.

Diego County, California, as type locality, since the subspecies occurs in Sonora only as a migrant; and *I. cucullatus restrictus*, from Agiobampo, Sonora.

It is gratifying to see so extensive a paper on Mexican birds since, in spite of its proximity to the borders of the United States, México has long been in need of comprehensive studies of its bird-life. It is hoped that the present paper will be followed by others dealing with other states of our sister republic.—J. T. ZIMMER.

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