

RECENT LITERATURE

Delacour and Mayr on the Birds of the Philippines.¹—This volume, one of the "Pacific World Series" is the first attempt to survey the rich bird life of the Philippine Archipelago since McGregor's book published in 1909 and Hachisuka's unfinished work, parts of which appeared between 1931 and 1935. It differs from both of its predecessors in that it is essentially a field manual, and it therefore has a more condensed, compressed textual style. As is to be expected from its authorship, it also reveals a great reduction in the number of genera recognized as "valid," a feature that is of relatively little significance in a field book, as the sole interest of the potential user would be to identify to species the birds observed and not first to ascertain their generic positions. On the other hand, it certainly does not interfere in any way, although the inclusion, at the end of the book, of a list of generic synonyms may conceivably cause the amateur user of the volume some needless puzzling. For the taxonomist, on the other hand, this list is a useful adjunct.

The authors inform us that although the avifauna of the Philippines has been fairly completely listed, it is otherwise the least known of the whole Pacific world. In matters of habits and local distribution, especially, are the gaps in our knowledge great, and the present volume might well become an important building block in helping observers to identify the objects of their observations and so make them available as bits of data to help fill in these gaps.

The book is divided into two main parts and an appendix, which, again, is divided into two sections. In the first part the authors briefly discuss and summarize their generalizations concerning bird geography and bird habitats in the Philippines. Excluding the Palawan group, which is rightly treated separately in the appendix, there are about 450 species of birds known from the islands, of which over two-thirds are residents and less than one-third are visitors. These birds are influenced in their distribution by three main factors, climate with its resulting pattern of plant distribution, former land connections between the islands, and proximity to neighboring land masses, such as China and Formosa, Celebes, etc. The authors find that most Philippine birds show Malaysian affinities, but some indicate closer ties with Oriental and Palaearctic elements, indicating, as is to be expected, more than one line of original invasion to account for the present avifaunal picture.

The second and larger part of the book is taken up with the systematic description of the birds themselves. Each family appears to have been "written up" by one of the two authors (the responsible initials are given after each family in the table of contents), but to have been checked by the other as well. This section is illustrated by black and white drawings of many of the birds, on the whole very well done, by E. L. Poole and A. Seidel. The text appears to have been carefully compiled with the field user in mind; it gives every indication of successfully meeting the need it was designed to serve.

The birds of the Palawan group, being predominantly Malaysian, and, more especially, Bornean, than those of the Philippines proper, are treated in Appendix A. Of 111 resident species, 43 are Malaysian, 27 Philippine, and 41 are common to both subregions. Of these 111, seven are endemic in the Palawan group, and of these seven, the affinities of five are Malaysian and of only two are Philippine.

It is a pity that the publication of this eminently usable book was delayed until after the withdrawal of most of our troops from the Philippines, as this greatly cut

¹ DELACOUR, JEAN, AND MAYR, ERNST. 'Birds of the Philippines.' Post 8vo. pp. xv + 209, figs. 1-69, Aug. 27, 1946. The Macmillan Co., New York. Price, \$3.75.

down the size of the immediate public it was designed to help. It should have a continuing usefulness, however, and will certainly be a volume to be consulted by anyone having to do with Philippine birds.—HERBERT FRIEDMANN.

Birds of Chile.¹—This welcome volume—the first of two contemplated, is the best and most complete work of its kind that has appeared on the birds of any part of Latin America. The authors are all long-time residents of Chile and ardent bird students, and some thirty years of preparatory observation and study, in the field and in the laboratory, have made them eminently qualified to discuss the bird life of this interesting country.

The plan of the book is that of an illustrated handbook, beginning with the highest families of the Passeriformes and continuing to the Columbiformes, with local and English names, as well as the accepted scientific ones, with short descriptions of each of the Chilean subspecies, and illuminating accounts of range, song, nests and eggs, migrations and other interesting facts. Colored figures, by Mr. Goodall, are given of about one-fourth of the species, covering most of the genera found in Chile. In a number of cases where the different members of a genus or family are very similar, such as *Cinclodes*, *Muscisaxicola*, and the Columbidae, all the species are figured (in whole or in part) to facilitate direct comparison of the distinguishing characters. Two colored plates of eggs, showing those of 41 species, present all of the styles of color and markings that occur in the Chilean birds of the present volume.

In an introductory chapter there is an account of the physiography and climate of Chile, the zonal distribution of birds in that country, something regarding nomenclature, geographical variation, migration, bird topography and measurement, and the system of classification followed in the book. Throughout, the pages are illustrated further by photographs of nests, nesting sites, and terrain occupied by various species.

In the discussions of the various forms, the authors have gone to a great deal of trouble to supply for certain measurements the arithmetical mean, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation, even when the number of specimens in the sample is as low as three. The value of this feature is questionable in a book intended in considerable part for general public consumption. When the series are considerable, the figures can be of statistical value in technical studies, but they are of little use to anyone seeking to identify birds in the field. There is, however, an abundance of information that is of the greatest service in that particular, and the inclusion of the statistical figures does no harm.

The authors travelled widely over Chile in search of information with the result that many statements of previous record have had to be revised. Some species also have had to be added to the Chilean list and four forms are described as new, to be credited to one or other of the individual authors as indicated: *Xolmis pyrope fortis* Philippi and Johnson, *Tachuris rubrigastra loaensis* Philippi and Johnson, *Phloeocryptes melanops loaensis* Philippi and Goodall, and *Pteroptochos megapodus atacamae* Philippi.

The authors have set a mark which it is hoped will not only stimulate the study of birds in Chile but serve as an example for similar books about the avifaunas of other of our Latin American neighbors.—JOHN T. ZIMMER.

¹ GOODALL, J. D.; JOHNSON, A. W.; and PHILIPPI B., R. A. 'Las Aves de Chile, su conocimiento y sus costumbres. Tomo Primero.' 8vo, pp. 1-358 + 1, figs. 1-47 (col.), 1 map (col.), diagrams 1-3, 46 figs. (7 col), 1946. Platt Establecimientos Gráficos S. A., Buenos Aires. Price, \$5.00 U. S. (\$150.00 Chilean).

Nature on the Gulf Coast.¹—This is a book of essays on nature in the Mississippi Delta region of Louisiana and Mississippi, with particular emphasis on bird life with which the author proves himself to be on familiar terms. It is in no sense a treatise on ornithology, but the pages are filled with observations that bespeak a keen perception and love of nature and an appreciation of her various moods and manifestations. It is a book to be read leisurely as much for the literary flavor as for the natural history lore, and in so doing the reader will absorb much ornithology with the outdoor atmosphere that pervades the pages. One might question the statement that the dorsal plumes of the Snowy Heron are "characteristic only of the female in the breeding season" but perhaps this is an unintentional slip.—JOHN T. ZIMMER.

Birds of eastern United States.²—Mr. Pough has presented a most useful guide to most of the land birds of eastern North America (the hawks, grouse, cranes, and pigeons are not included). The western limit is set along an irregular line at about the 100th meridian in the United States and near the eastern side of the Rocky Mountains in Canada. The area covered is thus more comprehensive than has usually been considered as "eastern" and the book treats of various birds which one has been accustomed to call "western" such as the Roadrunner, the becards, the Cañon Wren, and others, even though their ranges cross the arbitrarily set line at some points. No harm is done by this, however, and the work is thereby only the more comprehensive.

Each of the species has a page or so devoted to it, with a short description and an account of its habits, voice, nest, eggs, and range. These are concise and well-drawn and give much important information that an observer needs to help him identify an unknown bird.

In addition to the text, there are colored figures of every species, often in the various plumages. These figures, by Don Eckelberry, are mostly very good and show the birds to good advantage. Some of them are not so satisfactory as most, due in part to less accurate color reproduction. The Horned Lark's throat is distinctly green, for example, and the Prothonotary Warbler's head and breast are too brownish. Some of the eyes are shown rather too large, and the eye of the male Redstart is too low. These imperfections do not seriously impair the usefulness of the plates in identifying the species concerned, and the average is quite satisfactory.

Mr. Pough, restricting his nomenclature to species, has invented vernacular names for various species which have several subspecies, with the result that there are some quite unfamiliar names on his pages. In some cases the name of a particular subspecies has been adopted for the species as a whole. It must be admitted that until the A. O. U. Committee on Nomenclature completes its current work on a new edition of the 'Check-List' there is no "official" list of names for the various full species.

There is an informative introduction to the volume covering general ornithology and bird watching. In a section devoted to plumages, the reviewer would have liked to see the established term "juvenile" (now in Webster's Dictionary) instead of "juvenile" which is not certainly distinct from "immature"; neither term is definitive while juvenile is unequivocal. J. A. Allen long ago presented a nomenclature of plumages that has not yet been bettered although some additions may be necessary for plumages he did not discuss.

¹ KOPMAN, HENRY HAZLITT. 'Wild Acres. A book of the Gulf Coast country.' 8vo, pp. 1-189, 1946. E. P. Dutton & Co., New York. Price \$3.00.

² POUGH, RICHARD H. 'Audubon Bird Guide. Eastern Land Birds.' 8vo, pp. XXXVII + 2 + 312, pls. 1-48 (col.), 3 figs. map (end papers), 1946. Doubleday & Co., Inc., Garden City, New York. Price, \$3.00.

Regardless of these points, Mr. Pough's book is an excellent guide for the identification of birds in the field and with its unusual completeness of colored illustration should admirably serve the purpose for which it was designed. It should have a long and useful career.—JOHN T. ZIMMER.

Ducks in flight.¹—Mr. Queeny has given us a superb volume for the naturalist, artist and sportsman. Devoted to ducks in the prairie lands of Arkansas, it contains as fine a collection of original photographs of these birds as the reviewer has had the good fortune to see. There are over two hundred of these, showing flocks and 'singles,' passing, coming in, settling, or leaving. Some of the most interesting ones were taken in sequence and illustrate successive phases of particular activities and the accompanying action of wings, tail, and legs—birds rising vertically from the water, flying momentarily upside down, dodging obstructions, making a "crash landing," changing direction, or performing almost any imaginable flight maneuver. It is clearly demonstrated, for example, that river ducks fly, not leap, out of the water, in a movement that takes place rather too rapidly for the unaided eye to perceive it. For about half of these critical pictures, Mr. Bishop has supplied a parallel drawing of the bird as photographed, showing the details that may be less clearly outlined in the photograph.

In addition to the illustrations, the author has supplied a correlative text discussing the mechanics of duck flight (with a supplementary comment by Glenn L. Martin), and a variety of observations on the birds' behavior under varying conditions. Other chapters describe the Arkansas region, some hunting experiences, a favorite dog, and practical suggestions for photographing flying ducks. There is thus presented a considerable amount of pertinent information that makes the work factually instructive as well as pictorially interesting.

Only a few minor errors have been noted: "uropygium" for "pygostyle," "Albert R. Rand" for "Brand," a transposition of "static" and "dynamic" in one of the captions, and a misidentification of the neossoptile tips of certain pictured feathers as "filoplumes." The greatest utility of the book will be found, of course, in the variety and excellence of the illustrations. The painter of ducks in motion should find here ample suggestion for attitudes, common or unusual, in which he can place his subjects. As the author quotes from Mr. Bishop, it is safer not to say, "Ducks never do that," but to say rather, "Ducks seldom do that!"

Mr. Queeny is to be complimented on his handsome and important addition to the ornithological bookshelf.—JOHN T. ZIMMER.

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¹ QUEENY, EDGAR M. 'Prairie Wings. Pen and Camera Flight Studies. Explanatory sketches by Richard E. Bishop.' 4to, pp. XIV + 256, frontisp. (col.), numerous photographs and drawings. Ducks Unlimited, Inc., New York, 1946. Price, \$15.00 (De Luxe, \$50.00).

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