

RECENT LITERATURE

Roseate Spoonbills at home.¹—Robert P. Allen was commissioned in 1939 by the National Audubon Society to make a thorough investigation of the Roseate Spoonbill in the United States to discover as much as possible of its life history, behavior, and ecology with a view to determining the reasons for its scarcity and the measures to be recommended for improving the situation. For two years he lived among these birds in Florida and Texas and brought back a great fund of significant information. His formal report was published by the Society in 1942 (*cf.* review in *The Auk*, 60: 291, April, 1943), giving the details of his careful studies. The present volume, intended for the more general reader, is the informal story of his experiences in the field in the course of his work. While the serious student will, of course, turn to the formal report for the full details, the present work contains enough of the broad picture to show what was accomplished.

Written in a breezy style, the account leaves the reader with a clear picture of this fine bird, of the country in which it lives, and of the conditions, favorable and unfavorable, that affect its life. The problem of its rehabilitation, at least in Florida, appears to lie in the disproportionately low percentage of breeding adults that return to this area in the spring, since only birds at least 35 months old are able to breed. Of such it is calculated that there are but 0.06 per cent of the total of spring migrants (erroneously given as 0.006 per cent on the basis of two out of 305!). Studies are still needed to find the winter home of the Florida birds and to determine the possible cause of the low ratio of adults that return for nesting. Fortunately the picture in Texas is more hopeful.—J. T. ZIMMER.

The Ruffed Grouse.²—Probably no native American game bird has been investigated by larger numbers of wildlife experts and been the subject of graver concern to conservationists than the Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*). The efforts expended in its behalf have been worthy of a book-length treatise for many years. This impressive volume, though not intended to be an exhaustive work, is designed "to cover the high spots of the life story, the ecology, and management of the ruffed grouse in a manner interesting to the sportsman, the nature lover and the lay reader, and at the same time be accurate and adequately documented for the technical man in the field of wild life management." (p. X).

The author began the study of the species in 1929 under the auspices of the New York State Conservation Department, the overall purpose being to determine reasons and remedies for periodic fluctuations in numbers. He worked on the project for over seven years, largely on the Connecticut Hill Game Refuge near Ithaca, New York. The results comprise the basic material for this book although it has been broadened by the author's experience gained after eight years' additional field work on wildlife in the northeastern United States.

The first two chapters are introductory in nature, considering briefly classification, nomenclature, coloration, pterylography, and history in the eastern United States. Recent taxonomic revisions are outlined. It is the author's feeling that the number of subspecies should be reduced to four, namely, *umbellus*, *togata*, *sabini*, and *umbelloides*.

¹ ALLEN, ROBERT PORTER. 'The flame birds.' 8vo, pp. XI + 233, 16 pls., May 26, 1947. Dodd Mead & Co., New York. Price, \$3.50.

² EDMISTER, FRANK C. 'The Ruffed Grouse. Its Life Story, Ecology and Management.' 8vo, pp. xxvi + 385, pls. 1-56, figs. 1-17, 1947. The Macmillan Co., New York. Price \$5.00.

Much of the information on life history is contained in the third chapter entitled "Biography." Here in story form is presented a typical course of events in the life of the grouse from one spring to the next. The text reads easily and entertainingly. Certain items of information that cannot be readily woven into the story's fabric are given under subheadings at the chapter's conclusion. Interesting though this chapter may be to the layman for whom it was intended, the ornithologist will undoubtedly desire more substance in the form of specific data and discussions. Moreover, he will very likely feel that numerous statements need either supporting evidence or clarification. The author applies Arthur A. Allen's "sex rhythm" theory, founded on studies of captive Ruffed Grouse, to wild birds, but renders no qualifying remarks or observational information. An incubating grouse is shown to give a deflection display in the presence of an intruding fox (p. 37), but to fly away when approached by a dog (p. 36). Is this difference in response of common occurrence? If so, what are we to infer? A weasel is described attacking and killing a drumming grouse (p. 50), yet later on in the book (p. 205) the statement is made that, although weasels are capable of taking grouse, evidence is lacking to identify their work. Is the description, then, based on evidence or supposition? The author indicates (pp. 45-46) that grouse are conditioned by experience to avoid being shot. He goes on to say: "With each escape from the hunters' bullets the grouse becomes more wary and more able to make a successful getaway. This ability to dodge shot and baffle hunters has been developed in a relatively short time. Wilderness grouse even today sometimes exhibit the fool-hen characteristics that most grouse possessed when the white man first introduced them to guns." These statements imply, on the one hand, that the elusiveness of the grouse, when confronted by the gun-bearing white man, is innate behavior which the species has recently acquired and, on the other hand, that certain individuals, not having inherited the behavior, acquire it by conditioning. Are we to deduce that the elusiveness of the grouse is a modern development? It is difficult to believe that the Ruffed Grouse has modified its behavior since the time when guns were turned upon it. On the contrary, it seems more logical to believe that the bird responds to the shot from a gun in the same innate manner that it has responded for centuries to the swift attack of such an enemy as the Cooper's Hawk.

The next seven chapters deal with ecology. The ornithologist will find them satisfyingly thorough and in marked contrast to the presentation of life history. They are well documented; they consider their respective titles from many logical approaches. Since the author's investigations were confined to northeastern United States, the information is primarily limited to that section of the species' range.

Many pages are devoted to different cover types and those selected by grouse under various circumstances. Apparently, large sections of a single cover type "are relatively unproductive of grouse, no matter what the type" (p. 70). Optimum year-round cover must contain a coniferous type, a mixed hardwoods type with available edge, and open type (*i. e.*, "open land, overgrown land, slashings, and roadways" (p. 80)). The food taken by the grouse is impressive in its diversity. The author points out that "some 374 kinds of plants and 131 kinds of small animal life" are "already known to be eaten by it in measurable quantities in the Northeast" (p. 103). Food types expectedly vary from season to season. The twenty-five primary foods of grouse are all plant foods and usually compose from 65% to 88% of the food of adult grouse at any time of the year. These foods are listed and discussed in detail. Three tables totalling twenty pages in length list all foods taken by grouse irrespective of quantity. According to the author, food supply is not a serious limiting factor.

"Three are few species of game birds that have as little trouble finding food year in and year out as the ruffed grouse" (p. 176). The species is shown to be seriously affected by adverse weather. In fact, the author concludes (p. 194) that weather conditions "play a big part in grouse fluctuations both great and small." The interrelationships of Ruffed Grouse to predators provide interesting reading. Of the mammalian predators, those listed in probable order of importance for south-central New York are foxes, weasels, and skunks; of avian predators, Great Horned Owls, Goshawks, and Cooper's Hawks. The author is of the opinion that predators may be a limiting factor only when grouse populations are "below the peak of their upward trend" (p. 221). The many diseases and parasites commonly affecting the species are taken up separately. The author does not consider disease a serious threat in any given area in most years, but when grouse are abundant over a wide range, or when weather conditions are such as to hasten reproduction of parasites, disease will become an important mortality factor. When disease is rampant among grouse "it is primarily effective in killing the young birds during the summer" (p. 251). Factors affecting productivity and populations seem to have been carefully analyzed. The author recognizes the fact that the Ruffed Grouse exhibits periodic fluctuations over its optimum range, but he is not ready to refer to them as population cycles. "Cycles" would indicate that changes in numbers of species would take place regularly according to uniform time intervals and would usually include a precipitous decline phase (p. 310). He would call them simply "periodic fluctuations" (p. 322) since "they are not sufficiently regular to be caused directly by some all-pervading common cause. They are inconsistent geographically, both in time of occurrence and severity of action."

The eleventh and final chapter takes up the subject of management which is based "on the whole ecology of the grouse; on its cover preferences, food requirements, principles of interspersions; the need of drumming logs, dusting sites, and escape shelter; and the relations of the bird to other animals and to man" (p. 326).

Each chapter is concluded by citation sources and suitable references. The book has a very detailed index, thereby greatly enhancing its usability. The fifty-six plates are from photographs, all of them excellent. The appearance of the text is enlivened by William Montagna's pen-and-ink drawings at the chapter endings.

The author has succeeded admirably in fulfilling the aims for which the book is designed and he is to be heartily congratulated.—OLIN SEWALL PETTINGILL, JR.

Practical conservation.¹—Dr. Graham has written a comprehensive discussion of the fundamental relationship existing between the land and the wildlife it supports or should support. There is no question but that both land and wildlife in America have been sadly misused in the past and efforts to improve them have been largely independent of each other. It is the author's studied conclusion that practices that are soundest for the betterment of the land, for its most economical use, are also best for the animal life of the region, providing it with the shelter and food without which it is unable to survive. For example, stream banks and gullies must be planted to permanent cover crops to prevent erosion, windbreaks are needed to protect certain open areas, hedges are useful as fences, neglected and unusable field edges can become a menace to crops unless planted to some neutral vegetation, drained marshes and swamps often prove at least unproductive and useless unless restored to their former condition, and woodland is most profitable if scientifically cropped instead of clean-swept. All of the recommended procedures in such cases give back to the wild

¹ GRAHAM, EDWARD H. 'The land and wildlife.' 8vo. pp, XIII + 232, pls. 1-32, 1947. Oxford University Press, New York. Price, \$4.00.

creatures the places and conditions needed for them to live and raise their young. They can be especially successful if the measures adopted are deliberately selected with a view to the double purpose.

There are also measures that may be taken without particular regard to the economic use of the land, such as the establishment of wildlife refuges or the simple preservation of bits of the fast-disappearing primeval forest and countryside, with an eye to their recreational or educational value. Such terrain has added utility as a standard guide to the capabilities of similar adjacent terrain, to which the natural climax vegetation gives a valuable clue.

These matters are taken up by Dr. Graham in considerable detail and with much practical suggestion. The book begins with a historical review of man's appreciation of his fellow animals and his developing interest in wildlife management and control. It closes with the idea that wildlife is an integral part of the land pattern and that true conservation involves not merely preservation but wise use of natural resources. The helpful discussions deserve careful consideration, not only by professional conservationists who may already be keenly aware of the problems, but by land managers and others who can put the ideas into practice on privately owned lands. The book is thoroughly recommended to all who are interested in the preservation of our native fauna.—J. T. ZIMMER.

Birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia.¹—This little work (in offset printing) gives an annotated list of 338 species and subspecies accepted as definitely known or recorded from the area, and 27 hypothetical forms. The authors personally examined specimens of 89 per cent of the accepted forms and most of the remainder were originally recorded also on the basis of collected material. A few have been admitted through sight records by one or more competent observers on more than one occasion. Some of the discarded records without this certification are not necessarily unauthentic, but the writers have wisely held them in questioned abeyance. Since there appears to have been no complete Maryland list since 1895 (the District of Columbia has been more fully treated), this list should serve as a useful handbook for bird watchers in the region.—J. T. ZIMMER.

The European Blackbird.²—As this book is a detailed account of the life history of one of the best known and commonest of British birds, the reader is bound inevitably to compare it with David Lack's 'Life of the Robin,' and such a comparison is invited in a foreword by G. Carmichael Low. This is unfortunate, because the book does not bear too close a comparison.

Many valuable facts are brought together and discussed in the light of the author's long experience, but the interpretation of these facts would have been more convincing if he had availed himself of modern techniques such as color banding. Also too many sweeping statements are made without reliable evidence, and the presentation of some of the material is merely repetitious.

All the way through, and at every possible opportunity, the author goes to great pains to stress the highly individualistic behavior of the Blackbird. Granted that since the bird is a living organism, possibly one with a glimmer of intelligence, its reactions will not always follow a predetermined pattern, the author's insistence

¹ HAMPE, IRVING E., AND KOLB, HAVEN. 'A preliminary list of birds of Maryland and the District of Columbia.' 8vo (paper covers), pp. XI + 75 4, 8 pls., 1 map, 1947. Natural History Society of Maryland, Baltimore.

² HILLSTEAD, A. F. C. 'The Blackbird.' A contribution to the study of a single avian species. With a foreword by G. Carmichael Low. Pp. 1-104, figs. 1-19, 1945. Faber and Faber Limited, London.

nevertheless seems a little self-conscious and some of his arguments take on the nature of a straw man.

On the whole it can fairly be said that as a study in bird behavior the work fails to live up to expectations, and what could have been a most important contribution turns out to be pretty much of a disappointment. On the other hand the photographic illustrations are excellent, informative, and very well chosen.—CHARLES VAURIE.

British bird life.—This book is an addition to the two preceding volumes, "Birds of the Day" and "Birds of the Night." These two were great successes and one glance at 'More Birds of the Day' is sufficient to see why popular request pressed for more of the kind.

The 95 photographs included in this latest number in the series cover 33 different species of British birds, some of them very common and familiar and others extremely local and rare. The number of photographs devoted to a species varies from a single picture to a complete sequence or illustrative series. The authors tell us that their choice was made from the points of view of interest and variety. In this they have been successful and their pictures, of course, are all very fine, and many are of outstanding quality and beauty.

Especially noteworthy is a sequence showing a young Cuckoo expelling the eggs of its foster parents from the nest. These are probably the finest photographs of behavior ever taken. Other remarkable series are those on the Hobby and Montagu's Harrier feeding their young, on domestic incidents in the life of the Rook, Stone Curlew, and Slavonian Grebe.

To these splendid and fascinating photographs which are justification enough in themselves, the authors join a text full of valuable field observations on behavior, call, food, and recognition notes, nest building, incubation, food habits, and methods of feeding.—CHARLES VAURIE.

Danish birds.²—This small book, prepared by the Danish Section of the International Committee for Bird Preservation, is a modern review of the breeding birds of Denmark. It is divided into two sections. The first is an annotated systematic list of 217 species which are known to have bred in the country during the 19th and 20th centuries. Included are 30 species which may possibly have bred in earlier times, but which have long ago disappeared. The systematic order followed is that used by B. W. Tucker in the 'List of British vertebrates,' 1935 (British Museum, Natural History).

The second section is an analysis of the present status of the birds in the systematic list. Excluding the 30 hypothetical species, the list stands at 187 species. During the last hundred years great changes have affected this number. Ten species have been extirpated and 17 others have shown a great decrease. Of the remaining 160, a goodly number, 18, are only sporadic or exceptionally breeding species, and only 15 have shown an increase during the last century. Thirteen species are known to be recent immigrants, the years when they were first discovered ranging from 1905 to 1941. The remaining 114 species are not itemized and are apparently holding their own.

The breeding bird fauna of Denmark, as expected, is seen to be rather small, but in spite of the relatively restricted area, several birds have characteristic distributions

¹ HOSKING, ERIC J., AND NEWBERRY, CYRIL W. 'More birds of the day.' Pp. 1-127, pls. 1-84 (95 figs.). 1946. Collins, London.

² JESPERSEN, POUL. 'The breeding birds of Denmark. With special reference to changes during the last century.' Pp. 1-79, 14 figs, including cover, 1 map. 1946. Einar Munksgaard, Copenhagen. Price 6 Danish crowns.

within its boundaries. Most interesting are the following which reach the northern limit of their breeding range in Middle Europe: Golden Oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*), Marsh-Warbler (*Acrocephalus palustris*), Great Reed-Warbler (*A. arundinaceus*), Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*), Thrush-Nightingale (*Luscinia luscinia*), and the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba guttata*).

The text is in English and includes the corresponding Danish names. This book is little but full of interesting data. It is handsomely printed and is illustrated by a number of pleasant field sketches by Johannes Larsen.—CHARLES VAURIE.

Footnotes on nature.¹—This engaging volume contains the informal narrative of numerous excursions undertaken by the author and several boon companions mostly in the not-too-distant environs of New York City. The party fundamentally consisted of four individuals made known to the reader only as the Artist, Herman the Magician, the Astronomer, and, of course, the author, with occasional temporary additions such as the Medical Student, the Falconer, and others. Each of the members of the party had his favorite branch of nature but all were interested also in the broader aspects, and with four pairs of enthusiastic eyes at work, there seems to have been little that escaped observation.

This is not, however, a dry list of things found on the excursions, although there is a catalogue of them at the end. In the general text, such matters are discussed as they came to hand, and if some of them brought corollary matters to mind, they also are discussed—perhaps the story of the Bartrams and *Franklinia*, perhaps some boyhood recollection, perhaps the subject of birds' nests, warbler migration, ferns or flowers. In last analysis, they concern nature in some form or other and hence are highly pertinent.

As might be expected in a book by John Kieran, there are frequent quotations from the classics, and attractive illustrations are furnished by wood engravings by Nora S. Unwin. Readers familiar with the natural history of the New York City region and parts of New England will enjoy comparing their observations with those of Mr. Kieran and his friends, while those not so familiar will learn much of what is to be found hereabouts. Both will find pleasure in the reading.—J. T. ZIMMER.

The English Robin.²—The first edition of this work appeared some years ago (*cf.* review in *The Auk*, 60: 609, Oct., 1943). The text of the present edition is largely the same except for certain chapters to which Mr. Lack has added new matter. As a rule, these additions serve largely to bring the subject more up to date by the inclusion of more recent discoveries or the inclusion of more supporting data. In at least one case—that of 'optimum spacing' of territories—Mr. Lack has become more positive than before of the fallacy of the theory.

Several new illustrations have been added and one is replaced by a better photograph. Students not familiar with the original volume will find this book a mine of information on the English Robin, with a treatment equaled by few accounts of single species.—J. T. ZIMMER.

A naturalist in the field.³—One of the most active of the field naturalists of recent times has been Willoughby Lowe whose expeditions in many lands in the Eastern Hemisphere so substantially enriched the collections in the British Museum of Natural History. The list he appends to the present volume shows an impressive

¹ KIERAN, JOHN. 'Footnotes on nature.' 8vo, pp. VI + 279, 20 figs, 1947. Doubleday & Co., Garden City, New York. Price, \$3.00.

² LACK, DAVID. 'The life of the Robin.' 16mo, pp. XVI + 224, pls. 1-8 (1 col.) figs. 1-6, June 25, 1946. H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd., London. Price, 8/6.

³ LOWE, WILLOUGHBY P. 'The end of the trail.' 8vo, pp. 1-178, 19 pls., 1947. James Townsend & Sons, Ltd., Exeter.

number of new forms which he discovered and brought back for study by various specialists. An uncounted number of other, little-known creatures he helped to make better known by the observations he recorded and the specimens he secured. Many of these are discussed briefly in the running narrative of some of his experiences which comprises the present book.

Mr. Lowe has already given us an account of other expeditions in his earlier book, "The trail that is always new" (1932), and the present volume treats of still others—Tunisia, Indo-China, the mid-Sahara, Tanganyika, and the Gold Coast are here represented. The narrative is filled with interesting—often amusing—accounts of the places visited, the people and peoples met, the conditions encountered, and, of course, the animals discovered. There are numerous comments on the behavior and other characteristics of many of the birds, mammals, and other creatures, most of which are duly identified in footnotes by their Latin names. One could wish that there were even more of these observations for it is evident that Mr. Lowe was a good observer as well as a keen collector. In a general book of travel, however, the author must cover many phases of the subject and keep the text in balance in order to interest various types of readers. It may be said that the present book has ably succeeded in this respect. Readers interested in natural history will find here a great deal to their liking.—J. T. ZIMMER.

Crow shooting.¹—The contents of this book may be of value to a crow shooter but to an ornithologist many of the remarks on the habits of Crows are just so much callous nonsense. The tone of what to expect is set off at the very start by gross and wilful exaggerations as to the depredations caused by the bird. We are told on the authority of anonymous "reliable surveys" that in 1941–1942 "there were sections of Saskatchewan where fully 85 per cent of the duck nests were ravaged by crows" and that in 1940 "crows destroyed 16,300,000 eggs and ducklings," and in 1946 the depredations "had risen to a kill of 30,000,000 ducks." These last two figures were given on the authority of Ducks Unlimited. Before accepting such sensational statements, ornithologists cannot be blamed for insisting on more reliable and less prejudiced "evidence."

One cannot help wondering at a mentality which, while permitting the calling of a bird by all sorts of strong names, "cowardly" being one of the mildest, advocates the use as decoys of tethered, crippled or live Crows, or of tethered or caged cats and foxes. An unbiased reader might apply the word "cowardly" to other than the Crows.

Such a reader will not be impressed by the pious statements and crocodile tears which are shed on the fate of the "many millions" of song and game birds, or on the farmer's hard lot, when the author rather naïvely states in his next paragraph that Crow shooting is justified because it "provides such a wonderful all-around training for the scattergunner that he is shortly able to hold his own in any hunting party" and improve his marksmanship "to the point where he enjoys a vast satisfaction in his gunning prowess."

Although I take it from Mr. Popowski that shooting is to him the most agreeable way to dispose of Crows, he has a good word to say for trapping. One of the advantages of this method is to provide gun clubs with a supply of live targets, the only drawback being that often two or three live Crows have to be left in the trap as decoys, and "It goes against my grain to leave a single one of the rascals alive, when I can whack it down." But "in order to get the maximum value from such captives, I tie bits of branch along the shanks of their legs, using thin wire to hold the clogs in

¹ POPOWSKI, BERT. 'Crow shooting.' Pp. XIV + 216, 49 figs., 1946. A. S. Barnes and Co., New York.

place." The irritation, which Mr. Popowski assures us is painless, causes "vociferous cursing [which] is certain to bring other birds."

This reader, for one, feels that the mentality which impels a man to kill at any cost, be it a lowly Crow, has nothing to do with sport and certainly does nothing to promote conservation. The control of Crows should not be left in the hands of self-appointed irresponsibles, but should be carried out by qualified agencies after study of local situations reveals the need of it.

The book is illustrated by a few photographs and a number of caricatures by Gordon Elliott; the caricatures, at least, are amusing.—CHARLES VAURIE.

Tasmanian birds.—This little book, although presented as "a book for the bush," contains in condensed form information about all the birds occurring in Tasmania, native as well as introduced. Included are 229 living native birds, breeders as well as visitors, and 10 or so introduced species. Of the native birds, 14 of the species are peculiar to Tasmania. The introduced species are mostly common European species, the Skylark, Goldfinch, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Blackbird, and the Starling. In Tasmania, too, they have become common with the exception of the Tree Sparrow which may have died out. The other exotics are the Chinese Spotted Dove, California Quail, European Partridge and several pheasants.

The value of the book, of course, is as a field guide. The field marks are emphasized, and included also are brief statements as to habitat, general habits, food, song, nest and eggs. A paragraph of general field notes, often of much interest, supplements the description and sums up in a few lines the author's experience with the bird.

The size is made for the pocket, but although it should prove to be very useful "in the bush," it does more than just provide a quick means of identification. Strictly speaking, however, its value as a means of field identification would have been greatly increased if, instead of the few random photographs, simple diagrammatic drawings such as illustrate Peterson's Field Guides had been included.—CHARLES VAURIE.

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¹ SHARLAND, MICHAEL. "Tasmanian birds, how to identify them." Pp. VIII + 122, 13 figs., 1945. Odham, Beddome, and Meredith Pty., Ltd., Hobart, Tasmania.

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