

RECENT LITERATURE

Birds of Arctic Alaska.¹—In 1921–1922, the Colorado Museum of Natural History sponsored an expedition to the Arctic coast of Alaska on which Mr. Bailey and the late Russell W. Hendee spent fifteen months collecting birds (and other specimens) for the Museum. Since the expedition, Mr. Bailey has kept in close touch with friends living in the region who have supplied additional material, and he has further explored the literature for records to add to those already in his possession. This report is thus calculated to include all the birds known to occur in that part of the country.

There is a brief, general description of the Arctic coast, a discussion of bird migration in that area, and a historical review of ornithological work there, while the botanical features are detailed by Professor Joseph Ewan of Tulane University. A more comprehensive view of the terrain is to be found in the narrative of the expedition which gives a running account of the experiences of the party throughout the trip.

The birds are then taken up seriatim and discussed principally in respect to their local occurrence. General descriptions of species and of nests and eggs are not included but notes are frequently added concerning special nesting details and activities, or taxonomic features that may have come to attention in the material secured or in published accounts. A number of important problems are pointed out as requiring further study and some answers are suggested as that the Pacific and Green-throated Loons may require specific separation.

The volume is copiously illustrated with many fine photographs of the birds, Alaskan land and seascape, hunting scenes, expedition and other personnel, and some of the exhibition groups prepared from the collections brought back to the Museum.

The book brings together many interesting facts about the birds of an interesting region and is a welcome addition to the literature of the subject, a good bibliography of which is appended.—J. T. ZIMMER.

Bent's 'Life Histories.'²—Mr. Bent is again to be congratulated on the appearance of a new volume, the sixteenth, in his outstanding series of monographs. As in previous numbers, he has combed a vast quantity of literature for the important facts concerning the life histories of the birds that fill the pages of the book, with the acknowledged aid of an army of contributors who have supplied special information in their possession. Winsor M. Tyler, Alfred O. Gross, Robert S. Woods, Mary M. Erickson, and Alexander Sprunt, Jr., have further contributed one or more of the accounts that are printed under their respective names.

The series is so well known, and appreciatively so, that there is no need to give a detailed review of the present part. Indeed, so much information is contained in the pages that it would be impossible to do so adequately. It is gratifying to be able to record the steady progress of this monumental work.—J. T. ZIMMER.

Birds in color.³—This book proved to be a great disappointment. When information was received that a volume was in press that would present color-photo-

¹ Bailey, Alfred M. 'Birds of Arctic Alaska.' 8 vo, pp. 1–317, 101 figs., 1 map. Colorado Museum of Natural History, Popular Series Number 8, April 1, 1948. Price: cloth, \$4.50; Paper, \$3.00; postage extra.

² BENT, ARTHUR CLEVELAND. 'Life histories of North American nuthatches, wrens, thrashers, and their allies. U. S. Nat. Mus. Bulletin 195: I–VII, 1–475, pls. 1–90, 1948. Price, \$1.75.

³ HARRISON, HAL H. 'American birds in color. Land birds.' Superroyal 8vo, I–XXIV, 1–486, 387 figs. (192 col.), 1948. Wm. H. Wise & Co., Inc., New York. Price [\$5.00].

graphs of a wide variety of North American birds, it was hoped that it would be a work of unusual accuracy and value. Unfortunately neither result has been obtained. Some of the many colored illustrations are accurate portraits but most of them either lack adequate detail or have the colors disturbingly false or off-key. The half-tone illustrations are similarly uneven. Some of them are very good but others, particularly the numerous photographs of mounted specimens, have little definitive or pictorial value.

The text is partly descriptive and partly anecdotal, and gives many facts about American birds in an easily readable form. The supplementary chapters with tabulated "Recognition Charts" and "Distribution Charts" contain many misleading or inaccurate placements, such as the Ferruginous Rough-leg among the "black" birds and the Eastern Kingbird among the "black and white striped" ones, the Eastern Hepatic Tanager as a bird of the eastern part of the United States and the Loggerhead Shrike as western. This portion of the book is in need of revision as well as the illustrations.—J. T. ZIMMER.

Island Life of Lake Michigan.¹—The group of islands in northeastern Lake Michigan has offered an unusual opportunity for the study of various problems of considerable interest concerning the distribution of animal species, their ability or failure to occupy certain islands and not others, their means of dispersal, their adaptability to differing local conditions, their success under competition, and the like. Some of these islands have received a certain amount of attention for a hundred years, but it remained for the Cranbrook Institute of Science, in collaboration with the University of Michigan, to undertake a comprehensive survey of the group as a whole. A series of studies was carried out from 1937 to 1944, of which this book presents a detailed report.

The various islands are described as to their topographic and ecological features and something of their past history and altered conditions when important. The report then takes up the herpetology, ornithology, and mammalogy in turn, and closes with a general discussion of the conclusions that have been developed from the study. An appendix gives a list of the land vertebrates arranged by islands. The chapter on birds was prepared by Dr. Van Tyne who was also a member of the field party in 1938.

There is a great deal of interesting information brought out by this study. As far as the birds are concerned, it was found that every island individually (and the group as a whole) was poorer in number of species than the adjacent mainland. Sixteen species that nest on the mainland do not do so on any of the islands and eleven of them were not found there even in migration, while five additional species that migrate over the mainland were likewise not found in the islands. Sixty-seven birds were found breeding on the islands of which six occurred on Beaver Island (the largest of the group) and certain small islands; sixty-one on Beaver and the larger islands, though with scattering single records from one or more of the smaller islets. One of the interesting facts discovered was that the Western House Wren occupies one group of islands and the Eastern House Wren another. A pair of Great Blue Herons and one of Duck Hawks nesting on the ground, Red-wings nesting in trees, and Towhees living in deep forest were among the observed modifications of behavior due obviously to necessity. The greatest variety of bird (and other animal) life was found on islands

¹ Hatt, Robert T.; Van Tyne, Josselyn; Stuart, Laurence C.; Pope, Clifford H.; and Grobman, Arnold B. 'Island Life: A study of the Land Vertebrates of Eastern Lake Michigan.' Cranbrook Institute of Science. Bulletin No. 27. 8vo, pp. i-xi, 1-179, frontisp, figs. 1-43, map, tables 1-15, June 30, 1948. Price, \$4.00.

with the greatest ecological diversity, regardless of comparative acreage, although the relationship is not in exact proportion owing probably to differing degrees of adaptability. No positive reason was adduced for the failure of so many mainland species to colonize the islands although the failure was, as might be predicted, less in the birds (13%) than among the other vertebrates.

This brief review will give a general idea of the nature of the discussions presented in this good report. It is stated that conditions for wildlife on the islands are improving owing to lessening human occupancy. It will be interesting to see some future report detailing the changes that may then have occurred. In the mean time there is much interesting and important information in the present account.—J. T. ZIMMER.

Birds of the Americas.¹—This welcome volume adds another number to this comprehensive series, now nearing completion. It was prepared under difficulties owing to the war and to Dr. Hellmayr's untimely death in Europe (*see Auk*, 61: 616, 1944), but Mr. Conover has ably brought the manuscripts to final order, having been responsible at first for the text on the Anseriformes (and some other groups that will appear in a later number).

This instalment follows the plan of the previous parts, with the extensive and invaluable synonymic references and the critical footnotes. Mr. Conover's extended studies of the game birds furthermore have made him specially qualified to offer opinions concerning the Anseriformes, some of which are at variance with the arrangements suggested in other recent publications. Among the points of difference from the A. O. U. Check-List and its supplements, seen at first glance, appear the following:

The genera *Querquedula*, *Chaulelasmus*, *Eunetta*, *Nettion*, *Dafila*, *Nomonyx*, and *Glaucionetta* maintained as distinct.

Chen hyperborea and *C. atlantica* specifically distinguished, as are *Melanitta fusca* and *M. deglandi*.

Dendrocygna autumnalis fulgens, *Anas fulvigula maculosa*, *A. diazi novimexicana*, and *Dafila acuta taitihoa* not recognized.

Branta canadensis broken into four species—*leucopareia* (with two subspecies), *minima* and *hutchinsii* (each monotypic), and *canadensis* (with four subspecies, including *parvipes*).

In other orders, *Plegadis chihi* is adopted in place of *P. mexicanus* which is considered of doubtful identity.

Phalacrocorax olivaceus mexicanus is considered a subspecies of *P. brasilianus*.

Ardea occidentalis is made a subspecies of *A. herodias* with *würdemanni* and *wardi* as synonyms.

Other distinctions will no doubt be evident on closer study, both among the North American species and those of the more southern regions. There is much food for study and discussion here presented. The proposed disposition of the geese of the *Branta canadensis* complex probably will receive extended consideration since these birds have given a great deal of trouble to taxonomists, few of whom have been able to agree on a satisfactory arrangement.—J. T. ZIMMER.

¹ HELLMAYR, CHARLES E., AND CONOVER, BOARDMAN. 'Catalogue of birds of the Americas and the adjacent islands in Field Museum of Natural History . . . Part 1, Number 2. Spheniscidae—Gaviidae—Colymbidae—Diomedidae—Procellariidae—Hydrobatidae—Pelecanoididae—Phaethontidae—Pelecanidae—Sulidae—Phalacrocoracidae—Anhingidae—Fregatidae—Ardeidae—Cochleariidae—Ciconiidae—Threskiornithidae—Phoenicopteridae—Anhimidae—Anatidae.' Field Mus. Nat. Hist. Zool. Ser., 13 (pt. 1, no. 2): I-VII, 1-434, Aug. 18, 1948.

Territory in bird life.¹—Although the existence of "territory" as a factor in the lives of birds was noted more or less casually several centuries ago, it remained for Eliot Howard to appreciate the full significance of the phenomenon and to express a detailed opinion in his classical book, a reprint of which is here offered. Except for a special introduction by Julian Huxley and James Fisher, the text is that of the original.

Originally published in 1920 (*cf.* review in *The Auk*, 38: 288–290, April, 1921) the book has long been out of print and inaccessible to many students who may have wished to have a copy on their shelves. It is now made available at a very modest price. Some of Howard's views have been challenged, whether successfully or not, in the intervening years and some have been strengthened and amplified, but there is no doubt that his thesis gave a marked impetus to, if it did not open, this line of thought and study, and its importance is of the first order. It should be read by everyone who has an interest in the lives of birds.—J. T. ZIMMER.

Oceanic birds of South America.²—This outstanding work was originally published in 1936 by the American Museum of Natural History (*see* review in *The Auk*, 53: 234–236, April, 1946), but has long been out of print. It is therefore gratifying to have it reprinted by The Macmillan Company and thus made available to many persons who have been unable to obtain copies of the original work.

The present issue has been prepared by offset printing and the general text, therefore, is identical with the original. The preliminary pages have been reset, with the name of The Macmillan Company naturally added to the title-page, while the date of publication has been omitted. The list of illustrations has been broken up so that each volume has its own, and the page-references to the plates have been omitted since all the plates, colored and half-tone, have been brought together at the close of their respective volumes.

Of the nature and content of the book there is no need to speak here since no changes have been made in its text. It remains the standard work on its subject that it became on its first appearance, and the new edition should make it available to a widening circle of readers and consultants.—J. T. ZIMMER.

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¹ HOWARD, ELIOT. 'Territory in Bird Life.' Demy 8vo, pp. 1–224, 11 pls., 2 figs., August 9, 1948. Collins, London. Price, 10s 6d.

² MURPHY, ROBERT CUSHMAN. 'Oceanic birds of South America.' 4to: Vol. 1, pp. I–XX+2, 1–640, 6 pls. (col.), pls. 1–38, text-figs. 1–61; Vol. 2, pp. I–VII, 641–1245, 10 pls. (col.), pls. 39–72, text-figs. 62–80, 1948. The Macmillan Company / The American Museum of Natural History, New York. Price, \$17.50.

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