

RECENT LITERATURE

Check-list of birds of the world. Volume VI. PETERS, JAMES LEE. (Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge), pp. xi + 259, September 27, 1948. Price, \$6.50.—It has been nearly 50 years since a comprehensive list of the woodpeckers has been published—Sharpe's 'Hand-List' (1900). The strictly American families of the toucans, puff birds, and jacamars were treated by Cory (1919), and the barbets of the world were reviewed by Ripley (1945). Otherwise there have been but fragmentary discussions of limited groups or populations. The present volume, therefore, is especially welcome. The woodpeckers, in particular, as suggested above, have been in need of study and Mr. Peters's arrangement does good service in clarifying their relationships as well as in facilitating further work in the group as additional discoveries make this necessary.

As was to be expected, the number of genera recognized in the entire order is less than that accepted by Sharpe, although the proportion does not hold for the individual families. One genus of honey-guide, discovered since Sharpe's work was published, raises the number of recognizable genera in that family by one. Peters recognizes ten genera of puff birds compared with Sharpe's seven, although in the intervening period Cory had accepted 13. The barbets are reduced to 13 genera and 79 species as compared with Sharpe's 21 genera and 140 (monotypic) species, above Ripley's nine genera and 66 species. The woodpecker family with but 37 genera shows a welcome reduction from Sharpe's 50.

Since the publication of volume 4 of this series, a disturbing discovery was made in Europe with respect to one of the provisions of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature—a provision whose full import has been generally overlooked and which, strictly interpreted, will require the rejection of many generic names now accepted and in current use. So serious are the implications that an effort is being made to have this provision annulled. In the mean time, Mr. Peters has held in abeyance the changes in the Order Piciformes that would be required under this article of the Code.

As may be gathered from the preceding paragraphs, the present volume embraces the Order Piciformes, including the Galbulidae, Bucconidae, Capitonidae, Indicatoridae, Ramphastidae, and Picidae. Two new names are proposed: *Melanerpes rubricapillus rubricomus* (for *Centurus rubriventris* Swainson) and *Picus canus sobrinus* (for *P. c. ricketti* Stuart Baker).—J. T. ZIMMER.

Birds over America. PETERSON, ROGER TORY. (Dodd, Mead & Co., New York), pp. xiii + 342, 79 pls., 6 figs., October 4, 1948. Price, \$6.00.—Mr. Peterson, artist-naturalist, is well known for his valuable field guides that have helped many a bird student in problems of identification. In his own travels in search of birds he appears to have visited all but one of the states of the Union. In the present book he recounts many experiences in the course of informal discussions of much wider scope. Warbler waves, falconry, conservation, "bird lists," migration, introduced species, and similar topics form the basis with which is woven the thread of the author's observations. It is not a narrative of wanderings as much as a general discussion of varied ornithological topics.

It has made an interesting book in which there is a great quantity of excellent ornithological information. The illustrations, nearly all by the author, are interesting, artistic, and sometimes unique, as is the photograph of the European goldfinch on Long Island.—J. T. ZIMMER.

Flight into sunshine. CRUICKSHANK, HELEN G. (Macmillan Co., New York), pp. x + 132, figs. 1-121, October 5, 1948. Price, \$5.00.—Florida has always attracted ornithologists and other naturalists. It has a wealth of plant and animal life unlike that to be found elsewhere in the United States and presents the nearest approach to tropical conditions to be found in the country. When an experienced photographer like Allan Cruickshank chooses to visit the region to obtain pictures of Florida birds, the results are sure to be worth while, both as to experiences to be narrated and photographs to be exhibited. Mrs. Cruickshank, who accompanied her husband on the present expedition, has given us the story of the trip, and Mr. Cruickshank has supplied the illustrations. In both particulars, the volume here noted may be highly recommended.

Mrs. Cruickshank's narrative contains many interesting details of their peregrinations, descriptions of the land and water (particularly the water), and accounts of the birds and other animals encountered. The principal focus of attention was the various rookeries of herons, ibises, and other water birds, and the accounts contain many interesting observations on behavior and other characteristics. Such was the sight of ospreys fishing while standing in shallow water; the discovery that snowy egrets have their lores cherry red for a limited period during the courting season; and the finding in the digestive tract of a single large cottonmouth mocassin one glossy ibis egg, three Louisiana heron eggs, part of another egg, a large young American egret, and an adult glossy ibis.

Needless to say, Mr. Cruickshank's photographs are of fine quality and are more than adequate and interesting adjuncts to the text.—J. T. ZIMMER.

Making friends with birds. PARK, A. F. (Macmillan Co., New York), pp. xi + 216, figs. 1-164, August 24, 1948. Price, \$6.00.—The author of this interesting volume has experimented with the problem of photographing wild birds without the use of a blind. The fine series of photographs he presents attests the success he has attained. His method is first to make a preliminary observation of the individual bird to determine its temperament; and second, to develop friendly relationship if the first step warrants it. A ten-minute study has proved sufficient to gauge a bird's qualities, and if it proves of too shy a disposition to warrant further advances, it is left forthwith. If more confiding and friendly, the second step is begun—a much more lengthy procedure.

Perhaps the most striking example recounted is that of a female willow warbler which became so trusting that it would enter its nest over and around his hand held at the entrance and even, when the hand completely blocked the doorway, would wait until the fingers were spread slightly apart and feed the young through the narrow aperture.

Experiences with some two dozen species are recounted with the addition of many valuable observations on the behavior of the birds in question. One interesting series of pictures shows a young greenfinch daily from shortly after hatching until 14 days old—each picture taken at the same time of day and at the identical distance and thus presenting an accurate demonstration of development of size as well as of other features.

That the pictures are good is evidenced by several from a series taken of pied flycatchers bringing food for the young, from which the identity of the insect food (given in a table) had been determinable, often to the species.

The book is most interesting and informative. Bird photographers will find each of the pictures documented as to camera, lens, diaphragm, emulsion, filter, and lighting.—J. T. ZIMMER.

British Birds. WILLET, WILFRED. (Adam & Black, London), pp. vii + 196, 44 text-figs., 16 col. pls., November 23, 1948. Price, \$2.50.—The introductory chapter is in many ways the most valuable in this book which was designed for the individual just beginning bird-watching. Here we find hints on making worthwhile observations, conservation, notebooks, field characters, and worthwhile cautions about reporting rare birds. There are no species accounts as such; related groups of birds are discussed together and comparisons are made as to size, general habitat, seasonal occurrence, nests, and relations to agriculture.

The book would be hard to use for field identification; pertinent identifying features are placed together with natural history notes of the group. The discussion of each group is interesting for leisurely reading.

A major criticism is that no scientific names are present anywhere, and that the indexing is insufficient. The text-figures add little in the way of aids to identification; in my copy at least, many are either poorly cut or poorly inked. They do of course make the book of greater interest to the amateur. The colored plates add much to the value of the book. Plates on young birds and on types of wings and tails are of special value.

This treatment of British birds is worthwhile at the level for which it was intended, but it is of little significance to the advanced ornithologist.—H. I. FISHER.

Days without time. TEALE, EDWIN W. (Dodd, Mead & Co., New York), pp. xiv + 283, 79 pls. (143 figs.), September 20, 1948. Price, \$6.00.—Readers familiar with Mr. Teale's earlier books will not need to be reassured that the present volume offers some hours of enjoyable reading. The twenty-nine chapters cover a wide range of natural history subjects from mammals (including man) to the amoeba and the plant kingdom. Days without time are those days when one can forget clocks and the routine duties that keep him chained to schedules and can stay out-of-doors and at his leisure watch the world of nature about him. Mr. Teale appears to have found the way to do this and has found the way to tell us about his discoveries.

Each chapter forms an essay by itself. Since the author is a keen observer with a wide range of interests, he has managed to bring in a variety of interesting information bearing on the subject under discussion. There is not a dull page in the book.

Birds, of course, receive their full share of the spotlight, both as major subjects and in secondary rôles. A chapter on John Burroughs and Slabside's has ornithological connotations, and one on W. H. Hudson and his early collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution is even more definitely ornithological. The fine photographs that illustrate the volume are as varied as they are excellent.—J. T. ZIMMER.

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