

THE EDITOR'S BOOK SHELF

HANDBOOK OF BIRDS OF THE WESTERN UNITED STATES. BY FLORENCE MERRIAM BAILEY. Illustrated by LOUIS AGASSIZ FUERTES and others. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston, Mass, 1902. 12mo. xcii + 486 pages + index; 36 full page plates, 2 diagrams, 601 figures in text. Price \$3.50 net and 19 cents postage.

FROM HAND BOOK OF BIRDS OF WESTERN UNITED STATES.



BY COURTESY OF HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND CO.

NORTHERN RAVEN.

To say that Mrs. Bailey's book "fills a long-felt want," tho literally the truth, puts the matter rather mildly. Up to the present time we have lacked a *scientific* manual of our *western* birds, which could be used alike by beginners and more advanced students. Since 1895 Mr. Chapman's "Handbook of the Birds of Eastern North America" has filled this place for states east of the

Mississippi, and it has remained for Mrs. Bailey to supply the very pressing need in the west. The book is in every way adequate and will certainly exert a very wholesome influence on bird-study in the west, no doubt stimulating to good work many who, heretofore for lack of proper literature, have felt their enthusiasm scarcely equal to the task of mastering our perplexing avifauna. I suppose there is scarcely a Cooper Club member who has not longed for a handy little volume to carry to the mountains or elsewhere during excursions afield. The "Handbook" will supply this want.

The book opens with an essay by Vernon Bailey on "Collecting and Preparing Birds, Nests and Eggs," which will prove very useful to the beginner. This is followed by sections on: "Note-taking, Note-books and Journals," "Life Zones," with chart; "Migration," "Economic Ornithology," "Bird Protection" by T. S. Palmer, and "Local Lists," giving lists of birds from Portland (A. W. Anthony); San Francisco Bay (water birds, W. H. Kobbe); Santa Clara Valley and Santa Cruz Mts. (land birds, W. K. Fisher); Pasadena (J. Grinnell); Ft. Sherman, Idaho; Cheyenne, Wyo.; Pinal, Pima and Gila Counties, Arizona. Following this comes "Books of Reference," including general works, periodicals, state lists, special subjects and popular works. For the benefit of the beginner is a note on "Use of the Keys."

The systematic portion, which treats of species west of the one-hundredth meridian is divided into Water Birds and Land Birds, very clear and concise keys being given to the orders and families of each. The line figures of feet and heads render the use of these keys especially easy. There are likewise genera and species keys in their proper places. Under each genus heading is given a short statement of general characters, and the accounts of species include a brief description of plumages, together with a note on distribution, the description of nest and eggs, food, and in most cases a sketch of the habits and personality of the bird. Many of these biographical notes have been contributed by Vernon Bailey. The text is further embellished with figures of birds, and heads, from drawings, and from photographs of skins. It is unfortunate that the requirements of space necessitated an over-reduction of some of the illustrations, and thereby impaired their usefulness. This is true of only a small portion. The task of finding a bird's name has surely been reduced to a minimum. We believe it has again been demonstrated that the easiest way to identify a bird is to begin at the bottom, and to progress by using characters of real weight in classification. Many ultra-popular books have attempted to point out a royal road with grotesque keys, founded on superficial and "catch" characters, which, besides being totally inadequate, must have left the novice in a very hazy state of mind.

In nomenclature the author has wisely conformed to the A. O. U. Check-list "except that modern scientific usage has been followed in dropping the possessive form in vernacular names of species." In the rather difficult task of fitting the Check-list to our western avifauna, she has been singularly successful, largely by the sensible course of including the many recently described forms in foot-notes, with references to the original description. With this equipment both 'splitter' and 'lumper' should feel equally at home with the "Handbook."

This short notice would be eminently incomplete if mention were not made of the thirty-six well-executed full-page plates by Louis Agassiz Fuertes. Especially worthy of praise are all of them, but we find it difficult to control our enthusiasm in the case of several, particularly the Northern Raven, which is herewith reprinted, thru the courtesy of the publishers. Mr. Fuertes work is always good, but we believe this about his best.

It is difficult to do justice to a book of this character in so brief a space, and as we have already given our candid opinion of it we would close by advising all readers of this magazine to procure a copy.—WALTER K. FISHER.

THE BIRDS OF NORTH AND MIDDLE AMERICA: A DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE OF THE HIGHER GROUPS, [etc., 6 lines]. By ROBERT RIDGWAY. Part II. Family Tanagridæ.—The Tanagers. Family Icteridæ.—The Troupials. Family Cœrebidæ.—The Honey Creepers. Family Mniotiltidæ.—The Wood Warblers. Washington: [October] 1902. (=Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus. No. 50, Part II.) Pp. i-xx, 1-834, plates I-XXII. (Outline figures of generic characters).

Part II of Ridgway's "Birds of North and Middle America" arrived on this coast in the latter part of October, a little less than a year after the first volume. Considering the immense amount of work involved it is still more surprising when we learn from the Preface that the remaining volumes are expected to go to press from now on "at the rate of two a year." Even granting that Mr. Ridgway has been compiling the subject-matter for many years, one cannot help wondering at the amount of work required alone in keeping the synonymies up to date, for we find references quoted well into 1902.

The general plan of the whole work has already been referred to, in the CONDOR of January, 1902. It happens that the present installment has mostly to do with tropical groups, including