

however, attention may be called to the caption explanatory of fig. 21 (opposite p. 610), where there is evidently a mix-up of some sort. Then too, as regards the sentence at the foot of page 178, summing up the evidence in a peculiarly interesting line of argument, while the point the author wishes to make is evident enough, the wording is so vague as to bear an interpretation almost contrary to the meaning that it is intended to convey.—H. S. SWARTH.

ROBERT CUSHMAN MURPHY'S "NATURAL HISTORY OBSERVATIONS FROM THE MEXICAN PORTION OF THE COLORADO DESERT" (Abstract of Proceedings, Linnaean Society of New York, nos. 24-25, 1917, pp. 43-101, pls. I-VI) is well worth the reading by anyone who is interested in the desert, be he traveller or naturalist. Murphy's "Narrative" of his month's trip south from Calexico in search of antelope for the Brooklyn Museum will furnish much information of value to the prospective visitor to that or any similar region; while the more or less blasé frequenter of desert country will have his memories pleasingly vivified by the accurate and lively description of day-by-day experiences. Some of the comments, such as those upon the psychology of the burro, and the fearsomeness of rattlesnakes, verge upon the naive, but usually save themselves by reason of refreshing allusions, often of keen aptness. One's first experience in a new land is certainly the one to take advantage of in recording impressions, and Murphy proves himself to have realized this to good purpose—aided by a ready pen.

Ornithologically, we find that there are many good field observations scattered through the narrative, as also in the "Annotated List of the Birds" (pp. 80-100); for example, upon the apparent ability of the Desert Quail to go entirely without water. This seems to be a really new idea, and should be followed up by others in a position to ascertain the facts. The "List" numbers 134 species and is based not only upon the author's own observations but also on a previous paper by Stone and Rhoads (Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci., Phila., 1905, pp. 676-690). The only serious criticism we can make of Murphy's work is that he should have taken Rhoads' sight determinations at face value and thus perpetuated a lot of exceedingly doubtful records (see CONDOR, VIII, 1906, p. 78). Also why not as well have taken into account W. W. Price's article on "Some Winter Birds of the Lower Colorado Valley" (*Bull. Cooper Orn. Club*, I,

1899, pp. 89-93), which covered nearly the same region?—J. GRINNELL.

BIRDS OF AMERICA; Editor-in-Chief, T. GILBERT PEARSON, National Association of Audubon Societies. Consulting Editor, John Burroughs. Managing Editor, George Gladden. Associate Editor, J. Ellis Burdick. Special Contributors, Edward H. Forbush, William L. Finley, Herbert K. Job, L. Nelson Nichols. Artists, L. A. Fuertes, R. B. Horsfall, R. I. Brasher, Henry Thurston. Nature Lovers Library [vols. I-III]. The University Society Inc.; New York [1917]; 4to, vol. I, pp. xviii+272; vol. II, pp. xiv+271; vol. III, pp. xviii+289; pls. five+106, numerous half-tone illustrations and some line drawings, all these being scattered throughout the three volumes. Issued about November 1, 1917.

I suppose there is no copyright on the title "Birds of America". Even so, it seems a sacrilege that this distinctive title, once used with authority, should be now appropriated for a work which falls far behind what such a title ought to cover. In the first place, the present book deals with any approach to adequacy only with birds of the eastern half of North America north of the Mexican line; and in the second place, the treatment is at best, save pictorially, superficial and far from "complete", though this word is used rather blatantly in the claims for the work set forth in the Preface, Introduction, and announcements. From a strictly scientific point of view I believe that this work, instead of advancing the previous standard of ornithological output, or even maintaining it, tends to lower it.

It is from the western viewpoint that the book here under review is most seriously at fault. The text, almost wherever it deals with exclusively Californian or western birds, is characterized by inconsequential verbiage where it is not actually misleading or even erroneous. I will cite some specific illustrations.

The Mountain Chickadee, so widespread from the Rocky Mountains westwardly, is dismissed (vol. III, p. 212) with one paragraph as "very similar" to its "eastern relative"! The account of our common California Brown Towhee (vol. III, p. 61, under "Cafion Towhee") is simply nonsense. The Abert Towhee (same volume, p. 62) is accorded just six lines of 10-point comment, the first sentence of which is: "Despite the fact that the Abert's Towhee is the largest of the plain Towhees he is extremely shy."

Both parts of this statement are wrong, and the correlation implied is doubtful. The Lucy Warbler is stated (vol. III, p. 119) to have been observed by "Dr. Gambel" on "Santa Catalina Island"!

Concerning the Bell Sparrow (vol. III, p. 49) the implication in regard to habitat is erroneous. The Gray Vireo is disposed of (vol. III, p. 111) in a text mention under "Bell's Vireo" as if it were a subspecies of that bird or else very similar in habits and structure—which it is most emphatically *not*. It is to be noted in this connection that the whole subspecific concept is botched. Why *can't* mention of subspecies be omitted altogether from books intended for "popular" use!

After the unmodified claims of completeness, we are surprised to find that several western species are left out altogether, such as Baird Sparrow, Plain Titmouse, and Marbled Murrelet. Even whole genera are omitted, namely *Catherpes* (the Canyon Wrens), *Aimophila* (Rufous-crowned Sparrow and its relatives), and *Cardellina* (Red-faced Warbler).

We are told in the Preface that the "technical" parts of the "Birds of America" (descriptions and distributions) are taken from Ridgway's *Birds of North and Middle America*, but modified so as to avoid the use of technical terms. Scrutiny of some of this "technical" matter, thus credited to Ridgway, shows it to be very much abbreviated and sometimes "adapted" to an extent that we feel sure Ridgway would hardly care to accept responsibility for. In a number of places we meet with most astonishing lapses in geography. For example (vol. II, p. 223), it is stated that "in southern California two local forms of this Jay [California Jay] are found"—"Belding's" and "Xantus's." Here, southern and Lower California are obviously confused.

I note that the name of "Walter Kenrick Fisher, Ph. D.", of Stanford University, is included in the rather large "Advisory Board" listed at the front of volume I. Yet it cannot for a moment be supposed that this acute ornithologist lent his approval to the character in detail of the western ornithology included in this work. This illustrates another way in which efforts are made by publishers to secure an appearance of scientific authenticity for their books.

I must now, in fairness, say that part of the western material quoted—practically the whole work is a compilation—, notably where specifically credited to Mrs. Bailey and some of that to Finley, is unquestiona-

bly creditable. Also it is very likely that a far greater proportion of the eastern contributions are correct as to fact than of western; for we see there frequent repetitions of such names as Chapman, Forbush and Job.

As to illustrations, it is obvious that access to the excellent colored plates by Fuyertes, which originally appeared in Eaton's *Birds of New York*, was the initial motive of the present enterprise. There are 106 of these, and also five really very good colored plates of birds' eggs by Thurston. In addition, there is a plethora of half-tones, these including some of the best photographic work of Finley and Bohlman, Job, and A. A. Allen. I fail to see why the editors and publishers could not have stopped here, instead of adding a great many more photographs of ghastly mounted birds, and still more reproductions from exceedingly poor drawings. Among the latter, the pictures of Verdin, Wren-tit and Pipit (vol. III, pp. 216, 218, 170) are to my mind merely painful caricatures. Still, in the aggregate, the illustrations are good and the quantity is amazing. These will attract and hold the attention of the average layman irrespective of the merits, or demerits, of the work otherwise.

Returning again to the text, I wonder why it is that scientific accuracy cannot more often enter into "popular" works on ornithology. Must we accept the apparent rule that "popular", that is, non-technical, ornithology cannot at the same time be thoroughly scientific? My own belief is that, on the contrary, this *can* be attained, and it *should* be achieved, by just such sponsors of popularized ornithology as the National Association of Audubon Societies, with the great field of interest this organization has created and is so fast extending.

Of course there are ten thousand "audubonites" who will accept the present offering as the gospel, to one critical ornithologist who is in a position to detect its serious faults. It may even be averred that inaccuracies in detail count for nothing as compared with the main purpose of securing and holding popular attention and thereby spreading the propagandum of bird-protection and esthetic appreciation of bird-life. Perhaps. If so, my conviction is growing that the term "scientific" must be absolutely withheld from application to literature in which the publishers' aims are primarily to secure popular consumption. Of course it is a feature of added recommendation (and hence of commercial value) if people can be

led to *think* they are absorbing "scientific" matter. But it seems to me that this claim cannot be made honorably by any person or organization, unless the greatest possible care has been expended to insure scientific accuracy *in fact*. This should be the primary concern, rather than be secondary to speed of publication and length of subscription list.

Better one thoroughly good book every ten years, than ten poor books discreditable to the science for which it is aspired to serve as popular interpreter. Popularization of a science is a worthy service, but it requires rare fidelity as well as exceptional talent.—J. GRINNELL.

MINUTES OF COOPER CLUB MEETINGS

NORTHERN DIVISION

OCTOBER.—The regular meeting of the Northern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was held at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, on Thursday evening, October 18, at eight o'clock. Dr. Evermann was in the chair, and the following members were present: Messrs. Bryant, Carriger, De Groot, Evermann, Grinnell, Lastreto, Mailliard, Wheeler and Wright; Mesdames Allen, Ferguson, Grant, Grinnell, Head, Knappen, Newhall, Schlesinger. Visitors: Mr. Austin, Mr. Schlesinger, Mesdames Bamford, Lenfest and Wheeler. The minutes of the September meeting were read and approved, and the August and September minutes of the Southern Division were read.

Mr. Carl Lien, proposed before the Southern Division, was elected to membership, and the following were proposed for membership: Mrs. G. L. Bamford, Oakland, by Miss Margaret Wythe, and Mr. Albert J. Kirn, Paola, Kansas, by H. W. Carriger; also three names from the August and September minutes of the Southern Division.

After a number of informal notes on migration offered by different members present, Mr. Dudley S. De Groot gave a talk on "The Breeding Birds of the Coronado Islands". Adjourned.—AMELIA S. ALLEN, *Secretary*.

NOVEMBER.—The regular meeting of the Northern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was held at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, November 15, 1917, at eight o'clock. The meeting was called to order by President Evermann, with the following members and friends in attendance: Members: Messrs. Bryant, Carriger,

Dixon, Grinnell, Hansen, Kibbe, Labarthe, Lastreto, Smythe, Squires, Wheeler and Wright; Mesdames Allen, Culver, Ferguson, Grinnell, Gunn, Kibbe, Kluegel, Knappen, Lueddemann, Meade, Schlesinger and Smythe; Visitors: Mrs. Bamford, Mrs. Labarthe and Mr. Schlesinger.

The minutes of the October meeting were read and approved. Mrs. G. L. Bamford and Mr. Albert J. Kirn, whose names were proposed at the October meeting, were elected to membership, as were also Capt. Gosse, Mr. Leach and Miss Young, whose names were sent by the Southern Division for approval. The resignation of Mrs. H. C. Bryant was accepted. Mr. Squires rendered an oral report of the work of his committee in its efforts to insure the protection of non-injurious birds in Golden Gate Park.

Professor Grinnell, the speaker for the evening, then described the Great Basin Avifauna as represented in California. Adjourned.—AMELIA S. ALLEN, *Secretary*.

DECEMBER.—The regular meeting of the Northern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was held at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, on the evening of December 20, at eight o'clock. Dr. Evermann called the meeting to order. The following members were in attendance: Messrs. Bryant, Carriger, Davis, Dixon, Evermann, Grinnell, Hansen, Heller, Kibbe, Labarthe, Lastreto, Leach, Mailliard, Snyder, Swarth, Wheeler and Wright; Mesdames Allen, Grant, Kibbe, Kluegel, Meade, Parsons and Schlesinger. Visitors present were Miss Newlin, Mrs. Labarthe, Mrs. Wheeler, Professor Hall and Mr. Schlesinger.

The name of Mr. H. Van Straaten, Oakland, was proposed by Dr. Frederick B. Davis. Mr. Lastreto appealed to Club members to support Mr. Dawson in his efforts to complete "The Birds of California". Mr. Lastreto also reported for the committee appointed to investigate the effect upon sea birds of the presence of oil on the water to the effect that certain of the oil companies have agreed to instruct their captains not to discharge oil from their vessels.

Nominations for officers for the ensuing year resulted in the following names being placed before the Club: President, Dr. Barton W. Evermann; Vice President, Professor J. O. Snyder; Secretary, Mrs. A. S. Allen; representative to the Associated Societies for the Conservation of Wild Life, Mr. A. S. Kibbe.

A letter from the Audubon Association of the Pacific asking that the Cooper Club