

ject—not systematic, nor descriptive of species, but something dealing concisely in down-to-date fashion with flight, feather structure, molt, coloration, senses, behavior, voice, life cycle, instincts, ecology and distribution, etc. A very valuable series of ten lectures dealing with these topics has just been delivered by Dr. Glover M. Allen of the Boston Society of Natural History and published in an informal series of pamphlets entitled "An Introduction to the Study of Birds," under the auspices of the New England Bird Banding Association. Now, we are glad to hear, Dr. Allen is working over and expanding this series of lectures so as to constitute practically the general text-book of ornithology that is needed. This is to be published in the near future by the Marshall Jones Company of Boston. We have confidence that Dr. Allen, with his usual painstaking care, will produce a book of ideal reliability and usefulness.

#### PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

DAWSON'S "BIRDS OF CALIFORNIA."\*—At long last (14 years have elapsed since we sent in our subscriptions), and after many unforeseen vicissitudes, this prodigious undertaking has been successfully accomplished. It was the financial support of Miss Ellen B. Scripps, of San Diego, extended to the author at various times during the progress of the work, but in phenomenally liberal measure of very recent years, that made publication finally possible. On March 12, 1924, we received by express from Los Angeles our sets, complete. Our "edition" is the Book-lovers', in four volumes, and our particular copies are marked nos. 1 and 2. We understand that the text in all of the several editions is the same. The differences between the editions lie in the number of the more expensive type of plates and in

the kinds of paper, format and binding.

The total edition of the book will be large, a selling campaign will be vigorously pushed, and the work will thus be widely disseminated, among the general public as well as among those especially interested in birds. Covering, as it does, the whole field of Californian ornithology, it will, to a very great extent, be accepted by its readers as *the* authoritative source of information upon the birds of this state. That being the case, it is well, perhaps, to consider, as one aspect of the work, the effect it will have upon the rising generation of ornithologists (if such there be any longer!)—upon the youngster in his early teens who begins to take intelligent interest in the birds he sees about him, turning to books for information and accepting unquestioningly as verity everything that is printed.

First, to consider the illustrations: There can be no question as to the high rating of this feature of Dawson's work as compared with anything heretofore accomplished in this line. Dawson's "Birds of California" is in this outstanding respect scientifically valuable—it contains a marvelous wealth of pictorial studies of our bird-life. Practically every full species in the state is represented by three or more finely reproduced photographs, usually of typical environment, of nest, eggs or young, and of the bird itself. A great deal of potential informative value pertains to all of these—subject of course to the capacity of the user of the work to seek it out. The photographs of bird-life, by Dawson, Dickey, Finley, Pierce, and the rest of the contributors to this feature of the Birds of California, form an almost exhaustless storehouse of ornithological knowledge.

The Brooks drawings, both colored and uncolored, constitute a large element in the illustrative value of the work. Brooks' very best standards of ornithological portrayal are, to our minds, shown in his studies of the Scott Oriole, the Bufflehead, and the Black Oyster-catcher. Now and then we observe one of his bird portraits that impresses us less happily, for example, that of the Canyon Wren, which looks *huge* and which does not exhibit the pose commonly seen in that species.

All together, the photographs and drawings may be relied upon as perennial sources of appreciation for the well-informed, and as trustworthy moulders of impressions upon the beginner.

As to the text, most of it, too, may be praised unstintedly. Information is there

\*The Birds of California | A Complete, Scientific and | Popular Account of the 580 Species and Sub-species of Birds | Found in the State | by | William Leon Dawson | of Santa Barbara | Director [etc., 2 lines] | — | Illustrated by 16 Photographures, 32 Full-page Duetone Plates and More Than | 1100 Half-tone Cuts of Birds in Life, Nests, Eggs, and Favorite Haunts, from Photographs | Chiefly by | Donald R. Dickey, Wright M. Pierce, Wm. L. Finley | and the Author | Together with 44 Drawings in the Text and a Series of | 48 Full-page Color Plates | Chiefly by | Major Allan Brooks | — | Book-lovers' Edition | Complete in Four Volumes [paged consecutively clear through] | Volume One [- Four] | — | South Moulton Company | San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco | 1923 | Sold Only by Subscription. All Rights Reserved. Small 4to, pp. xviii+2122 [total], illustrations as above.

in more or less quantity, and entertaining reading as well. The beginner can refer to the small-type paragraphs heading each account for detailed descriptions and for technicalities of various other sorts, concisely presented, and for the most part dependable as to correctness. There are lapses, of course; but usually these are of little moment. The general accounts, though perhaps a little uneven, give a good all-round impression of each bird in this state. Some of these accounts are scientifically important for the new information they contain. Pre-eminent in this regard is Dawson's treatment of the Gray Flycatcher (*Empidonax griseus*). Here for the first time is given an accurate account (based largely upon his own observations) of the habits and habitat of this heretofore puzzling bird. We believe his conclusions regarding this species to be absolutely sound. Mention should also be made of the treatment accorded the Sierra Nevada Rosy Finch and the Ruby-crowned Kinglet, both of which receive merited attention. Other species, too, might be specified, but these in particular attracted us.

It is not fair, perhaps, to criticize an author for his style, and Dawson's style is peculiarly his own, as distinctive as Carlyle's and, to a more prosaic writer or critic, nearly as startling. It seems true, though (at least we found it so), that perfervid modes of expression begin to pall on the reader if he essays to read by the hour consecutively. To get the most pleasure out of the book, we recommend reading but one chapter in it at a time, coming to it fresh of mind, to get the most pleasurable reaction from it; just as it has been said by some critic that no one should read more than one of Jacobs' delightful short stories in an evening in order to enjoy it to the full.

As to the fraction of the text that does not impress us so favorably, it is distinctly saddening to note Mr. Dawson's consistently deprecatory attitude toward the student of nomenclature and systematics, and toward the collector of specimens. This antagonism is evidenced in numerous poignant thrusts directed at one and another recent worker, either on the basis of some proven error committed by said worker (and who, in any field, working for any length of time can avoid error!), or on the basis of some differing opinion on the part of Mr. Dawson. In the latter case, his personal opinion is set forth with a manner of assuredness, as when he records (pp. 758-760) two addi-

tional races of Robin for California. Consistency is not manifest. Discussions by others of nomenclatural tangles are stigmatized as "quiddities"; but, such an opinion being held, why not adhere to a recognized standard, such as the A. O. U. Check-List and its supplements? Why introduce such a "quiddity" as "*Junco oreganus couesi*," or as "*Zonotrichia gambeli nuttalli*," or as "*Fregata minor palmerstoni*?"

Mr. Dawson is an enthusiastic collector of eggs, in our opinion a perfectly justifiable, a laudable, and moreover a pleasurable pursuit, but one which he feels impelled to defend rather warmly. We agree with his arguments but believe they apply as perfectly to the collecting of skins, which he decries. His statement regarding the collecting of a nest and eggs of Cassin Purple Finch (p. 207), that it "is no more a moral issue than is the wringing of a cockerel's neck when the pot waits," might just as well be said regarding the Leconte Thrasher whose escape from his "murderous 8's" evokes his wish (p. 709) to have done with "this weary killing business."

Now as to our initial enquiry, What will be the effect of such teachings upon the impressionable youth of the land who happens to have an instinctive leaning towards natural history? Will he be likely to develop into a serious, productive ornithologist, or into a casual, sentimental ornithophilist? Frankly, we are dubious.

Well, we have stressed unduly, perhaps, certain features that cross our grain. We have, however, curtailed expression of its generally admirable nature, since the review of the first two "parts" of the book, which appeared in THE CONDOR for November-December, 1921 (p. 198), says much in favorable vein that applies to the finished publication.

In conclusion, as the reader of this review will easily perceive, we see many features of Dawson's "Birds of California" to praise without reserve; and we see features which to us seem unfortunate. The values inherent in the praiseworthy features—the artistic and the esthetic ones—undoubtedly overtop the less commendable ones, in a work intended primarily for popular use. Can we say more than that we are thoroughly content with the ownership of our sets, and that if we had not subscribed at the outset of Mr. Dawson's enterprise we most certainly would do so now?—J. GRINNELL and H. S. SWARTH, Berkeley, California, March 29, 1924.