

## NOTES AND NEWS

The Brewster Medal was awarded by the American Ornithologists' Union at the annual meetings held in Toronto, September 8-12, 1947, to Francis H. Kortright, author of "The Ducks, Geese and Swans of North America," published in 1942 by the American Wildlife Institute. At the same meetings, Lancelot E. Richdale of Dunedin, New Zealand, was elected a corresponding fellow.

A. C. Bent has finished work on his "Life Histories of the Icteridae and Thraupidae," and is now starting work on the Fringillidae. The first volume on this family is to contain the birds of the 1931 Check-List from the cardinals to the crossbills, inclusive, for which he is ready to receive contributions of notes on habits or photographs.

### PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

**THE RUFFED GROUSE: ITS LIFE STORY, ECOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT.** By Frank C. Edminster. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1947, xviii + 385 pp., 17 figs. and 56 plates, \$5.00.

This book is a puzzling interspersion of competence and confusion. In many respects it is as good a book as could be written at this time, considering our limited knowledge of this baffling grouse, and considering also the extreme difficulty of learning anything fundamental about a bird that cannot be trapped or banded in quantity and that cannot be bred freely in captivity. On the other hand, some parts of this volume seem foggy both in basic thought and in presentation.

The author is at his best when he discusses predation. Here he possesses the unique advantage of having participated in one of the most important experiments so far made by American game managers: the alternation of control and no control on a pair of similar areas. He is weakest in parts of the chapter called "Biography."

As Lake States grouse hunters, we must first of all question the ecological sufficiency of the author's assertion (p. 269), repeated in various forms throughout the book, that "When woodlands are pastured it is detrimental to grouse and when this pasturing is intense enough to create a visible 'cattle line' it renders the woods practically non-inhabitable to grouse regardless of its other attributes." Our question pertains not to what is included in this assertion, but to what is excluded. To illustrate: in southern Wisconsin, where woods-pasturing has reached an advanced stage and is nearly universal, it has already helped to extinguish the Ruffed Grouse from most counties, and others become grouseless

year by year. Conversely, in parts of central and northern Wisconsin, where the dairy industry is only a few decades old, and where dairy farms, successional speaking, are still in the pioneer stage, the best grouse habitat and the existing cow habitat are often coextensive. Grazing, in our opinion, is a question of degree. It is just like cutting and fire: a little of it in part of the woods is good for grouse; a lot of it all over the woods is lethal.

Wildlife research progresses partly by internal pressure and partly by pulls applied at particular spots by reason of progress in related scientific fields. At the present time a good test for the up-to-dateness of any wildlife research is the author's awareness of recent upward pulls in animal behavior, in physiology, and in the use of statistics.

The present author in his discussion of territory (pp. 50-52) does not limit the term to defended area, and hence confuses the reader in distinguishing territory, home range, and radius of mobility. A more irritating error, repeated in several chapters, is his use of decimal fractions for measurements which could not, in the first instance, have been accurate within five or ten per cent. Thus (p. 213), "the brood mortalities [on two areas] were fifty-two and three-tenths per cent and fifty-six and three-tenths per cent respectively. By calculation, the loss of adults on the trapped area was twenty-three and seven-tenths per cent and that on the untrapped [area] thirty-two and two-tenths per cent." Later on the same page the author discreetly remarks that "detailed accuracy of the results cannot be claimed." Why then the decimals?

Again, on page 297, the writer compares grouse densities based on areas censused in various regions during different years, and he states, "These maxima were: two and seven-tenths, three and five-tenths, four and seven-tenths, four and eight-tenths and seven and three-tenths acres per grouse . . ." Who can census Ruffed Grouse on an area with this accuracy? Misleading fractions are often forgivable in tables where the total must equal 100, but they are not so easily forgiven in text where they imply an accuracy that does not, and often cannot, exist.

Practically all the evidence shown in this book points to non-cyclic behavior of Ruffed Grouse populations in the northeast. This region is peripheral to the extensive range of the bird. The overwhelming evidence for cyclic behavior of the Ruffed Grouse in the Lake States and Canada is conspicuously omitted. It is understandable and expected that an intensive study like this one