

NOTES AND NEWS

The Board of Governors of the Cooper Ornithological Society has requested the editors of *The Condor* to extract and print newsworthy items from the reports of monthly divisional meetings and to discontinue publishing minutes, as such, of the divisional groups. This plan will be instituted in the next issue.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

THE BIRDS OF ALASKA. By Ira N. Gabrielson and Frederick C. Lincoln. Color illustrations by Olaus J. Murie and Edwin R. Kalmbach, topography of a bird by Bob Hines and gazetteer by Myra A. Putnam. The Stackpole Company, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and the Wildlife Management Institute, Washington, D.C., xiv + 922 pp., 13 color pls., one fig., one map. 1959; \$15.00.

The publication of this volume brings to a close an ambitious project that has spanned the last seventeen years. During this period the work proceeded only as time was available from the many official duties of both writers with the Fish and Wildlife Service, and, more recently in the case of Dr. Gabrielson, with the Wildlife Management Institute. The rather extensive field experience of the senior author in Alaska, and the competence in the taxonomy of North American birds on the part of both authors, well qualified these men for this undertaking. Additionally, their intensive scrutiny of the scattered literature on birds of this area has resulted in a 55-page bibliography. The result is a much-needed and useful book.

Quite understandably, the greater part of the book, and its major contribution, is comprised of accounts of the 321 species and 414 subspecies the authors recognize as Alaskan birds. The wealth of information found here is arranged, in general, under the following headings: (1) scientific and vernacular names; (2) native names; (3) description; (4) general range; (5) range in Alaska; and (6) haunts and habits.

The nomenclature follows for the most part that of the Fifth Edition of the A.O.U. Check-list, although vernacular names are supplied for subspecies. Where only one race of a species is present in Alaska no vernacular name for the species is given. This will surely lead to some confusion, especially among less experienced students, and certainly makes use of the book more difficult. Notable departures from check-list nomenclature, other than in spelling, are few, of

which the following are examples: the designation of the Green-winged Teal as a subspecies, *carolinensis*, of *Anas crecca*; inclusion of the Ruddy Turnstones, confusingly referred to as European Turnstone, in the race *morinella*, not *interpres*; and the placing of the Bank Swallows in the race *maximiliani* (consistently misspelled with two l's) rather than *riparia*. Particularly puzzling is the referral of the Alaskan Gray Jays to the race *arcus*. This name was proposed for jays inhabiting the Rainbow Mountains of coastal British Columbia when it was revealed that the former name *pacificus* should be applied, through priority, to the birds in western Alaska. The races *kadiaka*, for the Rosy Finches of Kodiak Island, and *crassus*, for the Savannah Sparrows in southeastern Alaska, are recognized. The Lincoln Sparrows of Alaska, Yukon Territory, and the Mackenzie Valley are considered to be the race *allicola*, not *lincolnii*. Some of these changes seem very tentative and should be verified by further work.

The native names may prove useful for field workers, but some confusion will result from the fact they are variously allocated to dialect, locality, or both, or merely "Eskimo." The Innu dialect is incorrectly indicated as being spoken at Hooper Bay in western Alaska; actually it is spoken north of Norton Sound. The variation in native names, even between nearby localities, plus the difficulty of pronunciation, makes one wonder whether these are of real value to ornithologists.

The descriptions are taken from such sources as Bent's life histories, Chapman's handbook of eastern birds, Bailey's handbook of western birds, and numerous others. Included is length (casually given in inches), and a discussion of the plumages of downy young, immatures, and adults. These descriptions are often laboriously detailed and far exceed information necessary or pertinent for identification. Much space is devoted to unnecessarily detailed accounts of species known only as accidentals or casuals in the state. Notes on nest and eggs are also included in this section.

The statements on general range have been condensed from the Fifth Edition of the A.O.U. Check-list, while those on range in Alaska have been derived from such sources as the files of the Fish and Wildlife Service, the unpublished records of a host of observers, and the literature. Each record is cited to the original source or, when unpublished, to the observer. This extremely valuable and well documented compilation, the most outstanding single feature of the book,