

ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

THE CALIFORNIA WOODPECKER AND I. A STUDY IN COMPARATIVE ZOOLOGY. By William E. Ritter. Berkeley: University of California Press. 340 pp. \$3.50.

A philosophical discussion of the way of life of birds and men. The first part—"Chiefly Woodpeckers"—describes the behavior of *Balanosphyra formicivora bairdi*, a strikingly colored bird on head, wings and rump; much space is devoted to the remarkable communal storing of acorns in holes drilled in the bark of trees, and brief accounts given of the communal nesting. These woodpeckers live almost entirely on acorns, but have to wedge them into a hole or cranny before they are able to hammer them open. Sometimes they store nuts in inaccessible places, and occasionally they place pebbles in the holes. The stores are defended from Jays, Lewis Woodpeckers and squirrels. The author mentions the storing of food by Shrikes, Jays, and Nutcrackers, but does not mention the occasional occurrence of such activity in the Red-headed Woodpecker. As to nesting, three or four birds were seen excavating one hole, a female accepted two males in quick succession, two females sometimes lay in the same nest, while several adults feed the young of one nest. The males are more zealous in nesting duties than are the females, as is the rule with woodpeckers.

It is a great pity that the birds were not captured and marked with bands, colored feathers, or something of the kind; such a set-up should be studied in detail and inter-group relations determined. The value of the map on page 56 would have been much greater if the scale had been given.

The last three parts of the book deal with "Chiefly Both of Us"; "Mind, Brain, Conduct;" and "Chiefly Myself". Here the author is concerned with comparative anatomy, physiology and neurology, and in pleasant, informative style he discourses on many angles of his subjects. There is an index and a list of references.—M.M.N.

CATALOGUE OF BIRDS OF THE AMERICAS: PLOCEIDAE, CATAMBLRYRHYNCHIDAE, FRINGILLIDAE. By Charles E. Hellmayr, Field Museum of Natural History, zool. ser., 13, part 11, vi + 662 pp. Dec. 31, 1938. \$5.00.

With the appearance of this "Part" there nears completion after twenty years what is not only one of the thickest volumes on birds ever published (it is now 15 inches thick) but surely one of the most useful. Volume 13 of Field Museum's Zoological Series began to appear in 1918 and now, after the publication of 4,561 pages, there remain to be treated only the hawks, gallinaceous birds, "water birds," and other "ancient types" of birds.

For every recognized New World form of these families there is given in this work: the scientific name, an English name, scientific synonymy and important references, geographical range in brief, and a list of localities from which Field Museum has specimens. In addition, brief taxonomic characterizations are given in a great many instances. To do this was a tremendous undertaking but the author has succeeded admirably, especially in the case of the species of the Neotropical fauna on which he has long been an acknowledged authority. Unfortunately this Part shows clearly some ill effects of the author's long absence in Europe. Most of the forms which Dr. Hellmayr marks as unknown to him are in other collections in the United States whence they would instantly have been loaned to him on request. The manuscript was apparently finished at least seven years ago and then was recently and, perhaps, a little hastily, brought up to date just before going to press. Like preceding Parts, it is characterized by the resurrection of a certain number of old scientific names, and by the "lumping" in one species of forms not previously considered conspecific. Relatively few of these changes concern species of the A.O.U. Checklist area.

A feature of this series which we have always found hard to understand is the wholesale fabrication of English bird names. The utility of supplying long and

often stilted English names for birds ordinarily seen in life only by Spanish and Portuguese-speaking people is certainly doubtful. Perhaps that is why it has been so hastily done. Consequently, as in earlier Parts, there arise such regrettable errors as repeatedly providing the same English name for two different species, as Ashy Sparrow (pp. 528 and 541) and Black-headed Finch (pp. 347 and 439). Our familiar Eastern Grasshopper Sparrow is still thus labeled but *the* Grasshopper Sparrow we find is *Myospiza humeralis humeralis* of South America (p. 477). That these careless duplications are habitual in this series may be shown by calling attention to a few earlier cases like: Lesson's Oriole (part 10, 1937, pp. 115 and 129), Thick-billed Euphonia (part 9, 1936, 49 and 52), Black-throated Euphonia (loc. cit., pp. 17 and 56), Baird's Flycatcher (part 5, 1927, pp. 127 and 214), Lawrence's Flycatcher (loc. cit., pp. 185 and 215), and Yellowish Flycatcher (loc. cit., pp. 214 and 246). The hasty work of some editorial clerk may also be responsible for such quaint names in the present Part as "Screaming Seed-eater" (p. 201), "Superciliated Seed-eater" (p. 172), or "Mrs. Dickey's Bunting" (p. 109) but it was no ordinary man who was inspired to call one poor little sparrow by the English name of "Papallacta Atlapetes" (p. 391). Another unfortunate sparrow is named the "Venezuelan Grasshopper Warbler" (p. 477).

Field Museum has always been generous about sending complimentary copies of these volumes to research libraries and to technicians in this field but it is regrettable that they find it necessary to fix so high a price on the copies for sale—the only source for younger workers. The prices on the parts so far issued of this volume add to the imposing total of \$40. For paper-bound volumes without illustrations (except for one color plate in each of the first four parts) this seems rather high. We are also puzzled to comprehend the aims of an institution which prints less than 800 copies of a work like the present (for example, the edition of part 10 was 772), and yet finds it possible to publish and give away each year more than 5,000 equally expensive Annual Reports that are of little value to the scientific world.

This book is of course a necessity for anyone doing serious work on the taxonomy or distribution of New World birds.—J.V.

AN ECOLOGICAL GLOSSARY. By J. Richard Carpenter. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1938: 12mo, viii + 306 pp., 12 appendices. \$4.00.

Ecology has long been noted for the profusion of its terminology. Any effort to define and index these terms is most welcome. Mr. Carpenter has listed for us in alphabetical order nearly 3,000 words and phrases proposed by ecologists. These are accompanied by brief definitions and references to the original or later important uses or discussions. Many ecologists will note the absence of some favorite term, or will criticize the author for listing only the original meaning of some word which has gradually acquired a rather different one, but the fact remains that the author has done a noteworthy job in preparing this glossary by which every ecologist can profit.—J. V.

AVES, ZOOLOGICAL RECORD, 74, 1937, published in 1938. By W. L. Sclater. 7s, 6d + 2d postage. Zoological Soc. of London, Regent's Park, London, N.W. 8.

We have been surprised at the number of bird students who are overlooking this valuable index to ornithological literature or do not realize that the separate AVES section can be conveniently purchased at a small price. The 1937 section, now available, is a booklet of 116 pages which lists, with full title and reference, 1699 ornithological references and cross-indexes them fully under topics, geographical regions, and taxonomic units. Obviously this index is not all-inclusive but it seems to be growing steadily better. More general support, both moral and financial, from American ornithologists would do much to assist.—J. V.

A LABORATORY AND FIELD MANUAL OF ORNITHOLOGY. By Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr. Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Co. 1939. ii + 127 pp. \$1.70.

The appearance of a new manual for ornithology courses is an event of great interest to the ever-increasing army of bird students and teachers. The present manual is much the most thorough and accurate we have seen. It is divided into two parts, designed for laboratory and for field studies.

The first part, naturally much the longer, treats of the anatomy, characters of birds, classification of birds, plumages and coloration, distribution and migration, the living bird in captivity, and the measurements and weights of birds. The last four categories seem to be new to such manuals. We are glad to see at the head of the section on measurements of birds a statement of some of the uses of such records. Too many recent "life history" studies of birds have included many measurements, especially of young, which lead the reader nowhere and are often not even usable.

We only wish the second part, devoted to field studies, could have been treated a little more fully. Space was probably limited, but even three or four additional pages, outlining what the field worker should look for, would have enhanced the usefulness of the manual. We note few typographical errors, a misspelling of zoocrythrin (p. 93) being the only one that might lead the student astray.

This is an excellent class manual which will do much to promote the successful teaching of ornithology.—J.V.

SHORT PAPERS

- BLAIR, W. F. The Biotic Districts of Oklahoma. *Amer. Midl. Nat.*, 20, No. 2, Sept., 1938: 425-454.
- BRODKORB, P. New Subspecies of Birds from the District of Soconusco, Chiapas. *Univ. Mich. Mus. Zool. Occ. Papers* No. 401, Mar. 1, 1939: 1-7—*Crypturellus cinnamomeus soconuscensis*; *Odontophorus guttatus matudae*; *Oreopyra viridipallens ovandensis*; *Pteroglossus torquatus esperanzae*; *Oncostoma cinereigulare pacifica* subsp. nov. from Chiapas.
- GRAY, A. M. Winter Foods of the Bobwhite Quail in the Black Belt Soil Province of Alabama. "Issued by Dept. of Conservation," Montgomery, Ala., 23 pp., 2 tables, 1 map.
- NELSON, A. L., Talbott E. Clarke, and W. W. Bailey. Early Winter Food of Ruffed Grouse on the George Washington National Forest. *U.S. Dept. Agri., Circular* No. 504, Dec., 1938: 1-37, figs. 1-30. \$.05 of Supt. Documents.—In Virginia and West Virginia.
- RLEY, GARDNER M., and EMIL WITSCHI. Comparative Effects of Light Stimulation and Administration of Gonadotropic Hormones on Female Sparrows. *Endocrinology*, 23, Nov., 1938: 618-24.
- THOMSON, A. L. Some Remarks on the Present Position of the Orientation Problem. *Bull. British Orn. Club*, 59, Jan. 21, 1939: 35-9.
- . Review of the Past Year [in Ornithology]. (November 1, 1937, to October 31, 1938). *Ibid.*: 30-35.
- WOLFE, L. R. A Synopsis of North American Birds of Prey and Their Related Forms in Other Countries. *Bull. Chicago Acad. Sci.*, 5, No. 8, Dec. 23, 1938: 167-208, 10 maps. \$.25.—An interesting compilation of the characters and approximate ranges of these birds. The breeding ranges of the various subspecies of ten species are diagramed on small scale outline maps. We understand that the object of this paper "was to help the average bird student in this country to a better understanding and appreciation of American birds of prey by pointing out in abridged form their relationships with those of other countries." In view of this objective, the omission of several well-known subspecies of the Duck Hawk and of other species should not be taken too seriously.