

ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

FIELD BOOK OF EASTERN BIRDS. By Leon Augustus Hausman. Illustrated by Jacob Bates Abbott. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1946: 4 × 6¾ in., xvi + 659 pp., 6 col. pls., more than 400 figs. \$3.75.

With this book G. P. Putnam's add a bird identification volume for eastern United States to their well-known pocket-sized Field Book series. It treats "all birds east of the Mississippi and the majority of the birds east of the Rockies."

The text for most species is arranged under the seven subheads: Other names, Field marks, Field description, Characteristic habits, Notes, Habitat, and Range. The author follows the nomenclature of the A.O.U. Check-List (1931) but ignores its two supplements (1944 and 1945).

Nearly every species is figured in black and white, and 94 are also shown in color. Many of the drawings have already appeared in the author's "Illustrated Encyclopedia of American Birds" (1944). The color plates are good and well printed. The species to be represented were wisely selected, and these plates alone will solve quickly many identification problems. A strange exception occurs on Plate 5, where the very similar Bicknell's and Gray-cheeked Thrushes are figured and appear to be quite differently colored. Many of the pen-and-ink drawings are good, or even excellent, but a considerable number are not recognizable. Even among such distinctively marked birds as the male wood warblers, we find nine drawings that no one could possibly identify except by the legend.

In order, presumably, to assist the reader, the account of each family and of almost every species, however short, is allotted a full page, and this results in many nearly blank pages—a curious procedure in a pocket guide, where space is at a premium. The additional subspecies under each species are given separate headings following the species account (and in some cases are even figured), but the text for these is usually condensed to a mere statement of the distinctive physical characteristics (usually not observable in the field). Unfortunately, in some cases the account of one of the subspecies has been separated from the others and appears among the races of a different species.

Forty-seven pages are devoted to an illustrated key to the families of birds found in eastern North America. The families as complete units are forced into one or another of 14 "sections," the specifications for which are a curious mixture of the ecological and the anatomical. The result, in many cases, will be more confusing than helpful.

The reader will find this volume least useful when applied to certain difficult groups such as the shorebirds, gulls, and flycatchers. Here the author has not taken advantage of the comparative characters described in recent years by our leading field workers, nor has the artist figured these species in a way to show such points. For example, little is said of the wing patterns of gulls, and still less is shown in the illustrations.

This volume will help many people to identify birds, but it falls short of the standard set by the best present-day field guides.—J. Van Tyne.

A NATURALIST'S SCRAPBOOK. By Thomas Barbour. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1946: 5½ × 8 in., x + 218 pp., 20 photos. \$3.00.

This posthumous collection of essays will be of great interest to all ornithologists. The author knew well the rich ornithological history of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard that he did so much to make one of the great centers of ornithological research, and he here relates many things not touched on in his earlier volumes. These new facts have not only great human interest but also real scientific value in that they help us to trace important bird specimens and generally to explain the movements of earlier ornithologists and their collections.

Other interesting chapters tell of the recent transformations of the Boston Society of Natural History and the Peabody Museum of Salem, tasks in which Thomas Barbour had an important part. A third group of chapters concerns Barbour's travels many years ago in the East Indies and the subject of zoogeography to which Barbour made such important contributions.

This delightfully written volume—in some respects the best of all his four volumes of essays—is being welcomed enthusiastically by Thomas Barbour's many friends.—J. Van Tyne.

BIRDS IN KANSAS. By Arthur L. Goodrich, Jr. Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture, vol. 64, 1946: 340 pp., 6 col. pls., 169 figs.

We presume that the title, "Birds in Kansas," was deliberately chosen to express the fact that this is a book for the general public on Kansas birds—not a new State list meant to supplant W. S. Long's scientific report (1941).

The text is arranged in a curious way. The species accounts begin with a selected list of 82 "more common Kansas birds"; following that, the author begins at the beginning again and gives a fairly complete list and account of Kansas birds, merely mentioning, and citing pages for, the species already treated in the first section. There may be some advantage in breaking the text this way, but we suspect that many readers will be more confused than helped by it. Also, it is hard to see what criterion was used in selecting the birds to be treated in the text. Some species recorded in Kansas but once (such as the Man-o'-war-bird) are listed and even figured, while others that sometimes occur there in considerable numbers (such as the Bohemian Waxwing) are relegated to mere mention in footnotes.

We cannot share the publishers' enthusiasm for the six colored plates. The numerous text figures are derived mainly from two (strangely different) sources: Ridgway's "Manual of North American Birds" and the Slingerland-Comstock natural history publications illustrated by Fuertes. In fairness to Fuertes, it should have been stated that the hundred or so of his drawings reproduced here were originally intended only as outlines to be colored by students and were never meant to be presented as finished pictures.

The author is himself in error when he reproves (p. 215) the A.O.U. Check-List Committee for not using Wilson's original spelling of the specific name of the Black-billed Cuckoo, as anyone can easily check if he has access to the rare, original quarto "American Ornithology" (1811, vol. 4, p. 16). The emended spelling in later editions of Wilson has, of course, no bearing on the matter.

As frequently happens, the author's attempt to be "popular" has resulted in stilted sentences and trite expressions. The book is also marred by a good many misprints.—J. Van Tyne.

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