

ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS. Text and illustrations by Roger Tory Peterson. (3rd ed., revised and enlarged.) Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1947: $4\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{4}$ in., xxvi + 290 pp., 25 line illustrations, 60 half-tone plates (36 in color), 2 illustrated end papers. \$3.50.

In the third edition of a work which was highly successful in both earlier editions (1934 and 1939), and which in the second edition earned for its author the Brewster Medal, one might reasonably expect to find the original work modified only slightly by refinements and additions. Therefore, it comes as a surprise to find that the famous Peterson Field Guide (eastern) has been completely rewritten and re-illustrated.

Although the content has been altered substantially, the basic plan remains unchanged from that pioneered in the earlier editions. Birds are depicted as they are seen in the field, with a minimum of detail except as it may be useful in identifying the species. In figure and text, attention is focussed upon those characters which make it possible to discriminate among similar birds. By condensing into terse phrases his comment on appearance, voice, and range, Peterson has been able to compress a great amount of information into a volume of pocket size. The book is intended for use in the States and Provinces east of the Rockies. People in the western Plains will need to supplement this book with its western counterpart, a Field Guide to Western Birds (1941), or with some other work specializing in western forms.

In the main body of this book, in A.O.U. Check-List order, Peterson treats 440 species plus 7 hybrids and other forms. All but about 20 are illustrated, many by two or more figures; for example, most ducks are shown in three views and some warblers in four. Of those species not figured, the majority are western birds not likely to be encountered except at the border of the area. In the appendix, Peterson discusses 74 species of accidental occurrence and 181 subspecies—a total of 702 forms in the book.

Unlike most other illustrated books about birds, this guide is concerned exclusively with field identification. There is, for example, no discussion of behavior except as peculiarities in actions or habitat may be an aid to recognition. Although such a guide is of greatest value to the beginner, the expert also will find much of interest in it, particularly with regard to accidentals or unfamiliar areas.

Since most readers of this review are familiar with the earlier editions of the Field Guide, they will be interested in noting how this edition differs. The most striking improvement is the more generous use of illustrations, particularly those in color. All of the illustrations are new, and the insert plates have been increased from 40 plates, 4 in color, to 60 plates, 36 in color. Most of the figures are larger than previously, and the total number has been increased from about 600 to 1,000.

The text has been enlarged from 180 to 290 pages, and has been improved materially. In the discussion of each bird, a separate paragraph headed "Similar species" offers suggestions for distinguishing among the birds which bear even a superficial resemblance to one another. The author has followed the practice of his Western Guide in discussing subspecies in an appendix, rather than with the individual species. This is an improvement, it seems to me, for it avoids some confusion in the mind of the beginner and reduces the temptation to glib use of trinomials when subspecific identifications are not possible in the field.

In the main body of this edition, there have been added several species which are found occasionally at the fringes of the area, and in an appendix there are paragraph descriptions of those accidentals which have been seen in the East less

than 20 times. Among the minor innovations are groups of silhouettes of common birds at rest or in flight (a ready-made quiz program for a bird club entertainment) and an eastern check list on which the rarity chaser can record his "life list." An improvement in detail is the listing of the text pages opposite the figures on each plate; thus, the text and the figures now refer to each other.

Peterson deserves praise for his very thorough treatment, in figure and text, of the fall warblers, which have never before been handled so well. The illustrations in the book, in order to show field characters to the best advantage, have a diagrammatic quality; yet some of the color plates are vividly beautiful (for example, the heads of the terns opposite page 134).

This book is the culmination of Peterson's unmatched experience in the preparation of field guides, and I confess that I see no serious faults in it. However, it is probably too much to expect that any critical bird student will ever be satisfied entirely with a set of color plates. Although the draftsmanship is excellent, it seems to me that the printing of the plates is somewhat variable in quality. Many of them are excellent, but others are less well done, particularly those of the fall warblers (grays with a pinkish wash, gray-greens too yellowish) and the sparrows (too reddish-brown). Still, all the illustrations are satisfactory for their purpose.

Peterson shows wisdom in retaining the accepted common names for all species even though in some instances he expresses a preference for another name and offers it as an alternate (for example, British names for the Falcons). In a few instances, alternative names are given opposite figures in the plates without explanation to indicate whether Peterson is advocating a change or accepting a regional usage (for example, Black-necked Grebe, Arctic Loon, Sandwich Tern).

Unfortunately, two plates (Nos. 7 and 9) showing ducks in flight have been transposed. In "My Life List" six names have been placed at the ends of the wrong columns so that they are far out of systematic order (the Robin appearing between the Whip-poor-will and the Nighthawk, for example). I understand that these errors have been corrected in the later books of the first printing.

Although the introduction states that the cover is "waterproofed," a simple test shows that the color comes off with even a slight wetting. It is to be hoped that in some future printing the publisher can offer a genuinely water-resistant cover at little or no increase in cost, since, as tattered copies of the earlier guides testify, a large proportion of beginners carry this book in the field.

The significance of a book like this is tremendous because its greatest influence is felt among the rapidly expanding group of people who are taking their first steps in bird study. We are fortunate that such a superb book is available for the purpose.—Harold Mayfield.

LIFE HISTORIES OF NORTH AMERICAN JAYS, CROWS, AND TITMICE. By Arthur Cleveland Bent. United States National Museum Bulletin 191. 1947: xi + 495 pp., 68 half-tone plates. \$1.75.

This, the fifteenth volume of the famous "Bent's Life Histories," deals with some of our best known birds. The work is not a summary, but rather a symposium, with selections of observations, and students generally will come here for data and for ideas. Here we have the field naturalist giving us glimpses of birds' lives chosen from the pertinent literature and from his own experience.

Sometimes we see nearly the same thing through several people's eyes, or hear it through several people's ears: We find Clark's Nutcrackers' nests with Bendire in Oregon in 1876; with Dixon in California in 1934; with Munro in British Columbia in 1912; and again with Skinner in Wyoming in 1916. With Townsend, under his open lean-to, in his "forest" at Ipswich, we listen to mating Crows; again with Forbush on the banks of the Musketauquid we listen to Crows

giving melodious, soft, cooing notes; with Taylor we listen to the tender notes of a Crow in a treetop; and with Allen, we listen to a Crow rhythmically cawing. The material is often in the original observer's own words. This makes for greater bulk and less ease in finding things, but it adds meat to the dry bones, for selections have been made with an eye to the color and charm of their writing. This adds to the readability, and one may get a truer picture, for each writer sees the same thing in his own way.

When we come to the food of Clark's Nutcracker, before the method of getting seeds from pine cones is taken up, the stage is set: "Near me an ancient, gnarled limber pine (*Pinus flexilis*) stood on a wind-exposed knoll, raising a broad, open crown on a brown-plated trunk 2 feet in thickness . . . One of the nutcrackers flew to the tree above me . . ."

Fortunately, no one pattern of interpretation pervades the volume. It is a mine, not only of information, but of the original observers' ideas about the various subjects. Lorenz's idea of *imprinting* is included, as well as many anthropomorphic interpretations of behavior: Crows mobbing an owl because of "antipathy"; the California Jay plaguing a cat for "amusement," in a spirit of "mischief," while a Magpie is doing it "maliciously"; Clark's Nutcracker raising an outcry over game from "curiosity."

The material is classified under such headings as habits, nesting, eggs, incubation, young, plumages, longevity, food, voice, migration, winter, distribution, and egg dates. A section on field identification, included for many of the birds, gives an excellent idea of what the bird looks like in life, and a behavior section describes its "personality." Each subspecies receives a separate heading and treatment, but the better known forms of each species receive most of the attention; there is a protest against "millimeter races" quoted from Taverner under the Long-tailed Chickadee, and some subspecies are dismissed with only characterization and range. The accounts of several species are prepared by special contributors: J. M. Linsdale, B. W. Tucker, E. von S. Dingle, A. O. Gross, and A. Sprunt.

There are many items of special interest because they illustrate how varied are the lives and adaptations of the birds of a given group. The Blue Jay has been recorded as putting ants among the feathers under its wing to store them as food, or carry them to its young (though this may be an example of the little understood behavior called "anting"). The Florida Jay, along with many other corvids, hides away bright objects, such as bottle tops and bits of glass, as well as food.

With material such as this volume provides, comparisons may be drawn and correlations made. Browsing backward and forward, one notes, for example, geographical variation in habit. Crows in the east tend to make solitary nests, high in coniferous trees; in the west Crows tend to be colonial nesters and make their nests lower, and in deciduous trees. The Verdin, in Arizona, uses sticks to reinforce its nest and makes a firm rigid structure, while in Lower California it uses few sticks, and the result is a flexible nest.

The suggestion is put forward that Fish Crows have abandoned a former habit of picking ticks from the backs of cattle and sucking the blood of the animals, and that Florida Jays also have abandoned a habit of picking ticks from cattle. Both these habits were recorded by N. B. Moore, about 1870, in manuscript notes, and have hitherto not appeared in the literature.

The lack of natal down in the Magpie is postulated as an adaptation to a covered nest, but this does not agree with the fact that we find a similar nakedness in some other species, such as the Blue Jay, which have open nests.

Frequently birds appear as "good" or "bad": the Blue Jay is an outlaw and a robber; the Hooded Crow is a rascal; while the good Chickadee is one of the

farmer's friends. But it is pointed out that the food habits of the whole population over the whole year must be considered before a correct estimate of the Crow's economic importance can be gained, and in the case of the Rook an estimate was made of the size and density of the population before conclusions were reached. This last is a good example of work undertaken for its biological interest having real economic value.

Crows, as with many of their relatives, are aggressive birds, well equipped to cope with their environment. They are omnivorous and apparently have great curiosity and activity, continually getting new experiences. One would expect them to be intelligent, and they have long been considered to "have brains." Crows are often kept as pets, learn readily, and sometimes repeat human words such as "hello" and "mama." Psychologists have proved that they are intelligent by having them learn to distinguish geometrical figures. But an unintentional experiment is given in the food section when it might well have been used as an example of intelligence. In almond orchards in Washington, Crows were causing great damage. Thirty thousand Crows were involved, and the destruction of an eight hundred dollar crop was the work of but two days. After various failures at control, poison was inserted in almonds. Not more than one per cent of the Crows were poisoned, but the rest stopped feeding on almonds and left the area. This is intelligence of a high order—for the many to profit by the unfortunate experience of the few.

One is filled with admiration for this compilation—a guide to birds' life histories and to the writings of naturalists. The manuscript was completed in 1941, and only a few things have been added since. Consequently the list of literature lacks a good many items from recent years. A practice that may prove disconcerting to many readers is that of giving the distribution of a whole species under a single subspecies, sometimes not the first subspecies of that bird to be dealt with. The volume closes with 20 pages of "literature cited"; 68 half-tone plates with photographs of birds, their habitats, nests, and young; and an 11-page index.—A. L. Rand.

THE BIRDS OF NORTH AND MIDDLE AMERICA. Part 10. Commenced by Robert Ridgway, continued by Herbert Friedmann. U.S. National Museum Bulletin 50, 1946: 459 pp., 28 figs.

Part 10 of *The Birds of North and Middle America*, "commenced by the late Robert Ridgway, continued by Herbert Friedmann," is concerned wholly with the Galliformes or "Fowl-like birds." Like its predecessor, Part 9, which contained the Gruiformes (cranes, rails, gallinules, coots, sun grebes, and sun bitterns) it is issued under a title page which implies dual authorship, but the volume is actually the work of Friedmann. While one cannot but be impressed by Friedmann's scrupulous sense of fairness to his predecessor as Curator of Birds at the National Museum, it would simplify matters if the linkage of names were discontinued in the concluding volumes. As it stands now, a bibliographer is somewhat at a loss as to just how to cite Parts 9 and 10. Ridgway's contributions are fully set forth in the preface, and full credit is given to him. It would seem that such an acknowledgment more than fulfills every ethical requirement.

In manner of treatment this volume follows closely (as does Part 9) the form used by Ridgway in Parts 1 to 8, save that the figures are incorporated in the text at the appropriate places instead of being inserted at the end of the work. This has its obvious advantages and is to be commended. Further, I approve strongly the adherence to the Ridgway pattern of presentation. This has been criticized mildly by Alden H. Miller (1947. *Condor*, 49:134) as being—though adequate for the standards and limited available knowledge of a half century ago—unsatisfactory for more modern analytical formulae. This criticism

would seem uncalled for in light of Miller's subsequent observation that "surveys like the Ridgway series are by nature comprehensive rather than intensive." In such a case, uniformity would seem to be preferable to any radical change midway. I have in mind particularly the large groups of transoceanic users of this particular series who certainly would not welcome a change from the simplicity of Ridgway to some of the statistical analyses which at times are much more difficult to comprehend than are the characters of the helpless subjects to which they are applied.

A feature worthy of note is the close agreement between the quite independent opinions of Friedmann and the digest of opinions as represented by the findings of the American Ornithologists' Union Committee on Classification and Nomenclature (referring of course to the North American forms treated). Differences of opinion were, particularly in the days of Ridgway's earlier volumes, many and at times violent. These have tended to disappear, in large part because of the infinitely greater amount of data now available. I note but five divergencies in the present volume. These involve one race of the Spruce Grouse and three of the Ruffed Grouse which are recognized by Friedmann but not recognized by the A.O.U. Committee, and one race of the California Quail for which the reverse is the case.

A minor criticism, but one which is valid, is the irritating absence of a closing date for the book. It is obvious that some forms have been given consideration or rather re-consideration at dates later than others, even within the limits of a single genus. An investigator is often uncertain, even with the help of the extensive bibliographies, just where Friedmann's inquiries have ended. A definite date line which could easily be stated in the preface, would be a distinct help. Certain other items have been noted by previous reviewers and need not be reiterated here. They are, however, all of similarly minor character, and indeed one hesitates to mention them at all, considering the general magnitude of the work.—A. J. van Rossem.

BIRDS IN THE GARDEN AND HOW TO ATTRACT THEM. By Margaret McKenny.
University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1947: 7×9½ in., 8 (unnumbered)
+ 349 pp., 32 photographic plates, 16 colored plates. \$5.00.

Bird-lovers who have tried to purchase "Birds in the Garden" (reviewed in *Wilson Bulletin*, 52, 1940:47-48) will be glad to know that it is now available in a reprint. First published by Reynal and Hitchcock in 1939, it filled a real need by offering authentic natural history material in a style that is interesting to laymen as well as to specialists.

The same press—the Cornwall Press of Cornwall, New York—but a new publisher, the University of Minnesota Press, are responsible for the reprint. The text remains unchanged. There is a slight alteration in the arrangement of the introductory sections, including a welcome list of page references to the diagrams, the color plates (from Roberts' "Birds of Minnesota"), and the photographs. The photographs have been grouped together in one section of the book. The color plates, which are scattered through the book, are in a different order. The colored reproduction of a painting by Walter Weber on the dust cover of the original printing has been replaced by a photograph. Since the portraits of several species of birds were grouped on each of the plates in the original Roberts' book, some birds which certainly never frequent gardens appear in the illustrations—for example, the Kirtland Warbler.

Not only are the trees, plants, and flowers which attract birds listed for easy reference, but means of protecting and helping birds are discussed. Both town and country dweller will find this book an invaluable and attractive reference, whether his interest is in birds or in gardens. Although the book will be of most value to those living in the Minnesota region, anyone in North America will find it useful.—Helen Belfield Bates.

SPRING IN WASHINGTON. By Louis J. Halle, Jr. Illustrated in black and white by Francis Lee Jaques. William Sloane Associates, Inc., New York, 1947: $5\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ in., viii + 227 pp. \$3.75.

Mr. Louis J. Halle, Jr., writes a long essay in the manner of Thoreau, whom he ardently admires, on the exciting natural phenomenon, "Spring in Washington." As is too often the case, the work of the disciple is weaker than that of the master. But when Mr. Halle forgets Thoreau and writes with the excitement which a true birdman feels on discovering an unfamiliar bird or recording something unusual, then he makes his greatest appeal. When he describes his love of the songs of the thrushes, the Veery nesting record, or the swifts going to roost, the reader is rewarded.

Mr. Halle is a keen observer and contributes a few "good" or unusual natural history records. Therefore, it is disconcerting to read his diatribes against man and his works, yet find him resorting to a description of man's handiwork, such as a cathedral, to characterize what he finds most exalting in nature. Or again, to find that he does not perceive that many of the characteristics which he admires in birds he finds distasteful in man.

The black and white illustrations by Francis Lee Jaques are many and add charm to the book. Mr. Jaques' ability to portray beautiful trees, the strength and power of the wings of big birds, especially of waterbirds, and to give in small drawings the feeling of space and breathtaking height will delight his many admirers.—Helen Belfield Bates.

THE FLAME BIRDS. By Robert Porter Allen. Dodd, Mead & Company, New York, 1947: $5\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{3}{8}$ in., xiv + 233 pp., 16 plates (unnumbered). \$3.50.

Since "there is no accounting for tastes" is as true as it is trite, I cannot do better than quote the publisher's own description of this book for the benefit of *Wilson Bulletin* readers who have not yet seen it: "The informal story of a bird . . . it tells of adventures with night-prowling crocodiles, of lonely islands weirdly beautiful, of unbelievable human derelicts on lost and forgotten rivers, of the vast solitudes . . ." (from the front of the dust-jacket under two handsome Roseate Spoonbills in flight by F. L. Jaques). The jacket-flap adds: "an informal story that will be enjoyed by *the perfectly normal* person who can't tell a bird from a bumblebee" (italics, mine, I'm afraid).

Mr. Allen writes with considerable poetic enthusiasm, breaking on occasion into rhyme: inadvertent—

"Time is nothing to the mangrove, a decade or two is as fleeting as a half-drawn breath! Time, and the vigor of the mangrove. Life without death." (page 64); as well as advertent—

" . . . there're frigate birds and oysters
Little hermits in their cloisters

And proud pelicans who romp [*sic*] beside my door." (page 78).

The ornithological student (with his abnormal faculty for telling a bird from a bumblebee) will no doubt prefer Mr. Allen's previous book on the Roseate Spoonbill (1942. *National Audubon Society, Research Report No. 2*), to which Mr. Allen calls this "a sequel, in a more popular vein" without claiming to present new ornithological material. Indeed, he uses parts of the earlier monograph almost word for word (though without quotation marks); compare page 129 of "The Flame Birds" with page 71, column 2, of "The Roseate Spoonbill." However, all but four of the twenty-one excellent photographs (by Eleanor Pettingill, Allan D. Cruickshank, and others) are apparently new. At least, only four of them are taken from Allen's earlier monograph. One of the new photos shows the downy Roseate Spoonbill (by Hugo H. Schroder), and a fine series of three (by Eleanor Pettingill) shows a pair courting, calling, and nest-building. The book has no index.—J. Van Tyne.

THE COUNTRY DIARY OF A CHESHIRE MAN. By A. W. Boyd. Collins, London, 1946: $5\frac{3}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ in., 320 pp., 15 plates. 12s. 6d.

The charm of the English countryside, with its social and architectural stability, its (to us) old-fashioned agriculture, and its surprising (to us) wealth of wildlife, is known on this side of the Atlantic to a favored few travellers and to the naturalists. Mr. Boyd's book (with occasional exotic bird observations from Morocco, Spain, southern France, and Finland) is mainly confined to the animal cycle of bird and insect life in the Cheshire countryside, in the west of England, and finds a worthy place in the competent vein of English natural history that stems quite directly from Gilbert White.

As I was marking passages in *The Country Diary* for discussion in this review, a note on a green viviparous cockroach from the West Indies caught my eye because I once presented just such a specimen, also from bananas, to my own museum, and was twitted by my colleagues on the Museum's acknowledgment in its annual report of the gift of "one cockroach." There is mention of the remarkable phenomenon of the increasing proportion of melanistic butterflies and moths in English urban districts, which has given rise to biological investigations of first rate importance. There are factual notes on predation on song birds by various owls and hawks. Constant mention is made of the recapture of banded birds. There are, in fact, too many items well worth mentioning to be catalogued further.

Much of the charm of the book lies in the range and variety and linguistic flavor of the bird names, many of which are familiar to anyone who reads English literature, ornithologist or no. The common names of birds are for the most part authentic in the vocabulary of the country folk and are not mere artificial book names, like those applied to many American birds. I fear that this is in fact more evidence that appreciation of natural history, and specifically of the kind of competent but non-professional natural history exemplified by Mr. Boyd's *Diary*, flourishes in England but lamentably not in the United States. This disparity between the British and the American amateur naturalists and between the audiences available to the professional naturalists on the two sides of the Atlantic should be a challenge to wealthy America, which too often boasts of its greatness without looking to the elements of culture that make for true and sound greatness.—Karl P. Schmidt.

HISTORY AND MANAGEMENT OF MERRIAM'S WILD TURKEY. By J. Stokley Ligon. University of New Mexico Publications in Biology, No. 1, 1946: x + 84 pp., 19 pls., 2 figs. \$1.00.

"Although this turkey has been known since earliest historic times, dating from 1540 . . . authentic information relative to it was scant and sketchy for more than three centuries. Even up to very recent times, comparatively little concerning this strain was known generally" (p. ix). Mr. Ligon has had an unusual opportunity to study the Merriam's Turkey, both through his own observations over many years and through the reports of other Federal and State investigators. Information from both sources is here brought together in five chapters on range and subspecific characters, life cycle and behavior, distribution, nesting and rearing of young, and management. The discussion of management takes up about half of the publication, dealing with such topics as land administration, population estimates, food habits and winter feeding, limiting factors, and restoration through transplantings of wild stock. Ligon considers the major limiting factors to be four, predation, habitat deficiencies and human influences, hunting, and fire, all of which are "more or less man-made, or are influenced by man's activities" (p. 68).

There is a lack of quantitative data in some of the life history material (how many nests, broods, etc.) which will make it difficult for later investigators to

integrate their findings with Ligon's. Quantitative figures on the effect of predation are especially needed, since he emphasizes predator control throughout. Although he has developed a strong argument in support of the necessity for coyote control, he has seriously weakened the whole discussion by the statement: "Increase in predatory animal populations invariably results in decrease of game species, turkeys in particular" (p. 70). There are, perhaps, too few published data on which to challenge his specific reference to turkeys, but the generality simply will not stand inspection.

Ligon is at his best when writing on the larger aspects of his subject—range, distribution, and history; the broad outlines of the life cycle; land use in relation to turkey management. His quotations from field notes give an excellent sampling of some of the details of the bird's life history. Altogether, he has given a great deal of information on a bird which is little known and unusually hard to study.—F. N. Hamerstrom, Jr.

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See also *Anatomy*: Glenny; Southern and Serventy.

EVOLUTION AND SPECIATION

SEE *Ecology*: Amadon.

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