

## ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

COMPLETE FIELD GUIDE TO AMERICAN WILDLIFE/EAST, CENTRAL AND NORTH/COVERING ALL SPECIES OF BIRDS, MAMMALS, REPTILES, AMPHIBIANS, FOOD AND GAME FISHES, SEA-SHELLS, AND THE PRINCIPAL MARINE INVERTEBRATES OCCURRING ANNUALLY IN NORTH AMERICA EAST OF THE ROCKIES AND NORTH OF THE 37TH PARALLEL. By Henry Hill Collins, Jr. Illustrated by Russell Francis Peterson, Nina L. Williams, and John Cameron Yrizarry. Harper & Brothers, New York, 1959: 7½x4½ in., xx+683 pp., maps, 200 figs., 48 color plates. \$6.95 (de luxe edition, \$7.95).

The title of this book, like an insurance policy, must be read in its entirety to be comprehended, and even then it leaves some doubt as to the book's scope. This work is, in truth, a field guide, with suitably small dimensions and strong binding, but its completeness is a matter of opinion, and its coverage is actually limited to selected groups of animals in eastern United States and Canada, west to and including the Black Hills and other eastern foothills of the Rockies, south to the borders of the Carolinas and Oklahoma, and north to and including the delta of the Mackenzie River and western Greenland. In all, 1439 animal species (author's count) are covered: first the birds, 454 species in 252 pages, well over a third of the book; then the mammals, 192 species in 88 pages; reptiles, 98 species in 70 pages; amphibians, 76 in 40 pages; fishes, 342 in 109 pages; and marine invertebrates, 277 in 99 pages.

Though four people, serving as an Editorial Advisory Board, "helped guide the plan of the work" and "read the manuscript in their respective fields," Mr. Collins wrote the book himself. How successful he has been in compiling his material, only the book's field use will tell. What interests us here are the organization and contents of the section on birds.

The introduction to this contains general information on the biology, history, ecology, and classification of birds and on some of the techniques of bird watching. All in all the information is appropriate, although the author has sometimes overstated matters (for example: "Being warm-bodied, birds can fly across the North Pole" (p. 4); bird watching is "a hobby of many millions of persons" (p. 5)), or has given misleading interpretations ("the food a bird eats is determined by the kind of a bill it has" (p. 7); species are arranged "in the presumed order of evolution" (p. 11)). Toward the end of the introduction he has outlined at length some of the activities and methods among bird watchers. Unfortunately, his treatment is so superficial as to make some of the aspects of bird watching seem foolish.

The bulk of the bird section comprises accounts of the species. Each adheres to a set pattern. After its title, consisting of common and scientific names, comes an introductory our-only-bird statement, a means to quick identification employed with discretion by Allan D. Cruickshank in his "Pocket Guide to the Birds" but used here as often as possible and at times carelessly. On page 22, the Gannet is said to be "our only large white sea bird with broad black wingtips" while on the same page, showing black on the tips of the wings, is a drawing of the White Pelican, a large white bird which frequents sea coasts. Again, on page 152, the Northern Three-toed Woodpecker is "Our only woodpecker with a *barred back and barred sides*," a statement that is hard to reconcile with a drawing on the same page of a Ladder-backed Woodpecker demonstrating very distinct barrings on the back and sides. Too many of the statements are loosely worded. The Western Kingbird (p. 154) does not have "*white outer tail feathers*" but outermost tail feathers edged with white; the Starling (p. 190) should have been referred to as a black bird instead of "blackbird."

Following the introductory statement comes information under subtitles, thus: Description, Habitat, Habits, Voice, Food, Nest, Eggs. The material in these categories is necessarily brief and, in the case of the first (Description), frequently marred by undefined terminology. Nowhere are "wing bars" and "eye rings" described or explained, nor are they shown on the drawing of the parts (topography) of the bird (Fig. 2); yet both terms are commonly used. In the accounts of the vireos, eye rings are used interchangeably with "spectacles" without any indication as to whether or not the terms are synonymous.

Toward the end of many species accounts is a subtitle, Age, under which is given the known maximum age. There are no additional figures to indicate *range* of known ages, or *number* of known ages. We are merely informed, for instance, that the Red-necked Grebe (p. 16) lives to 4 years and the Canada Goose (p. 33) to 22, the Arctic Tern (p. 127) to 22 years and the Roseate Tern (p. 128) to 10, the Robin (p. 180) to 10 years and the Eastern Bluebird (p. 183) to 4. While interesting, the figures can be misleading to the uncritical reader by giving him the idea that the Canada Goose usually lives five times longer than the Red-necked Grebe, and that there is a marked discrepancy in the ages of such closely related birds as the Arctic and Roseate Terns, or Robin and Eastern Bluebird, when we are actually not at all certain just how long these birds ordinarily live. Such data should either be qualified or left out entirely.

Each species account is concluded in a varied manner, sometimes with quotations from poets and naturalists, sometimes with comments on the habits of the species or its history. When a species' common name includes the name of a person, the conclusion is invariably devoted to identifying the person. In a field guide, whose text should be boiled down to bare essentials, the value of such extraneous material is questionable.

Greatly enhancing the species accounts are the range maps, one, sometimes two, to a species, worked out by Richard Ryan. They are carefully done, though one can find a few slips. The Horned Grebe is shown erroneously (p. 16) as breeding in northern New England, but this mistake is not as serious as the one in the accompanying text (same page) about the Horned Grebe "leaving for its Arctic breeding grounds." The map shows correctly that the species does not breed in the Arctic.

The bird illustrations comprise the drawings and silhouettes grouped in 51 figures and paintings in 28 color plates. All have been done by Russell Francis Peterson. It takes only a few moments for a person such as myself, who has regularly used Roger Tory Peterson's "A Field Guide to the Birds" (Second Edition, 1947), to discover that some of the drawings and silhouettes are, beyond a shadow of a doubt, copied from Peterson's work. Compare, for example, Figure 7 with the silhouettes on page 10 in Peterson, or the silhouette of the Turkey Vulture in Figure 26 with the silhouette of the same species on page 67. Here and there the artist has simply rearranged the subjects and made other minor alterations. A case in point is Figure 45, of the seven swallows on a sagging wire. In Peterson, page 162, there are six swallows in a different order from left to right, but posed in the same way, on a taut wire. Comparing the wash drawings of flying ducks in Figures 14, 15, 19, and 20 with similar wash drawings of the same birds in Peterson, one can readily surmise where the artist has obtained his ideas and some of his source material. He has taken pains to have all the ducks fly in the opposite direction.

The illustrations in color are amateurish in the extreme. If I felt that they represented a conscientious endeavor on the part of the artist to interpret birds as he has seen them in life or from specimens, I might say that he has mild promise; but I find too much evidence that he has relied to a large extent on other art work. It is hardly coincidence that his paintings on Plate 6 of the Great Blue Heron, American Bittern, and Green

Heron should show almost the same body attitudes and views as those depicted on Plates 14 and 15 by Don Eckelberry in Richard H. Pough's "Audubon Water Bird Guide." Interestingly, his painting of the male American Redstart with wings extended (Pl. 18) shows no orange-red on the bird's side (where the color should be), but on the bend of the wing where the color of the side often *appears to be* in paintings of the bird with wings folded.

When a new field guide to identification is published, we hopefully look for improvements that will more quickly point out distinctions. The bird section of this book has only one—a series of charts, by John Cameron Yrizarry, comparing closely related species. Otherwise we see what we have seen before in other guides, notably in the Peterson Field Guide Series—the same page makeup, the same use of boldface and italic type, range maps at the bottom of the pages as in Peterson-Mountfort-Hollom's "Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe." Most of the drawings repeat the subjects depicted in other guides. As in Peterson's "A Field Guide to the Birds," there are drawings to show differences in the bills of three loons and two eiders, in the tails of the three jaegers and the four longspurs, and in the heads of two ptarmigan, and there are two color plates of fall warblers. The illustrations have one original feature—with most of the species are pictured their eggs.

Originality has not been the author's paramount objective. What he has strived to do, it seems to me, is to pull together between two covers as much material as possible from currently successful guides in the hope that his book will supplant all of them. In this effort he has overreached, at least insofar as the bird section is concerned, by assembling more material than can be handled consistently and conveniently in the space available. He has brought in and treated extensively a few Old World species (e.g., Ruff and Curlew Sandpiper) that occasionally show up in this country and many species that barely come within the established western limits of this book. He has omitted much-needed illustrations of such common species as the Acadian and Traill's Flycatchers. The Townsend's Warbler is illustrated, but the text account is omitted. Species are woefully jammed on the color plates, and the presence of their eggs makes the crowding seem even worse. Some surprising species are grouped together on the color plates. On Plate 27, which is captioned "BIRDS ONLY FOUND IN THE EAST," are the Greater Prairie Chicken, Ruff, Dickcissel, and Painted Bunting.

It is disturbing that a work with these shortcomings in its ornithological section should reach publication. But it has, and the fact that it has been brought out by a major publishing house will probably assure its wide promotion. If it should come into such wide demand as to require reprinting, I trust that the author and publisher will, in addition to correcting the factual matter in the text, give credit for the art work where credit is due.—OLIN SEWALL PETTINGILL, JR.

SONGS OF WARBLERS OF EASTERN NORTH AMERICA. Volume IV of the "Sounds of Nature" Series. Recorded by Donald J. Borror and William W. H. Gunn; narration by Thom Benson. Federation of Ontario Naturalists, 187 Highbourne Road, Toronto. \$5.95.

Reproduced on this long-playing (33 $\frac{1}{3}$  r.p.m.) record are 170 songs of 38 warbler species "known to breed regularly" in eastern North America. The species are grouped according to certain similarities of their songs, thus providing easier means of comparing them. In the case of all species at least two or three examples of songs (in the Magnolia Warbler, as many as 10) are given from different individuals, usually in widely separated parts of the species' range. This serves to point up the very considerable variation normally occurring within

species, while at the same time enabling the listener to attain greater familiarity with the vocal abilities of each species. Despite the many songs (more than 400) on the record, one may easily find the songs he wants to play by referring to the back of the album where there is a list of species and the number of the bands which have their songs.—OLIN SEWALL PETTINGILL, JR.

**A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BIRDS.** With Special Reference to Anatomy, Behavior, Biochemistry, Embryology, Pathology, Physiology, Genetics, Ecology, Aviculture, Economic Ornithology, Poultry Culture, Evolution, and Related Subjects. By Reuben Myron Strong. Publications of Field Museum of Natural History [now Chicago Natural History Museum], Zoological Series, Vol. 25, Part 4, pp. 1-85, 1959 (Finding Index). \$2.75.

Parts 1 and 2 (Author Index) of Dr. Strong's widely used "Bibliography" were published in 1939 and Part 3 (Subject Index) in 1946. (For a review of all three volumes, see *The Wilson Bulletin* for 1947, vol. 59, pp. 49-50.) This, the fourth and final part (Finding Index), is a tool to assist in cross referencing. And a most welcome one it is!

From now on, almost anyone who uses the Bibliography will first consult the Finding Index, which consists of a "continuous alphabetically arranged list" of topics and names of bird species and groups of species occurring in the Subject Index. He will then go to the Subject Index which will in turn refer him to the Author Index. The vast majority of topics included in the Finding Index are anatomical, physiological, and geographical. Although many of them (for example, the eye) are already carried by special sections in the Subject Index, the Finding Index refers to these same topics in still other sections (in the case of the eye, 45 other sections). On looking through the Finding Index I was impressed with the large number of references to various bird species and groups of species, and also to geographical areas. I counted over 600 references to *Anas*, and 75 more references to 20 different species in the same genus. Geographical areas that I noted include all the continents (for example, Africa, to which there are 43 references) and many islands (Galapagos Islands, 10), as well as nations (France, 19), states (California, 22) and even cities (Chicago, 3).

The year 1926 marks the limit of literature covered by the Bibliography, but some references were added as late as 1938. To the modern investigator in ornithology, the Bibliography with its new Finding Index will be of invaluable assistance by facilitating a more thorough coverage of the earlier (and sometimes easily overlooked) books and papers.—OLIN SEWALL PETTINGILL, JR.

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