

RECENT LITERATURE.

Eaton's 'Birds of New York.'¹—No comprehensive work on the birds of New York has been published since the appearance of DeKay's quarto in 1844 and therefore, Memoir 12 of the State Museum (New York State Education Department) promises to be a most welcome contribution to the ornithology of the Empire State, judging by the first volume, which has just come to hand.

Mr. Elon Howard Eaton, who has spent five or six years in gathering and arranging the data, is to be congratulated on the results embodied in this first part, which covers the Water Fowl, the Game Birds and the Pigeons. The number of species accredited to the State has increased from 301 to 411 in the sixty-four intervening years and two heavy quartos take the place of DeKay's single volume. The opening chapter is a 'Summary of the New York State Avifauna,' the birds being classified in groups of 'residents,' 'summer residents,' 'transients,' 'winter visitants,' 'summer visitants,' and 'accidental visitants.' Then follows a chapter on the 'Life Zones of New York State,' accompanied by maps showing the distribution of some thirty species of the land birds and a table illustrating by a graphical method the relative zonal abundance of all of the birds of the State. The photographic maps are perhaps superior to anything yet published in a work of this character, being shaded to show elevation and with the distribution indicated by oblique red lines, but it is to be regretted that the lettering is so indistinct as to be well-nigh illegible. Those of us weak in geography would have liked besides a map showing the localities cited. There are also preliminary chapters on 'The Mt. Marcy Region,' 'The Increase and Decrease of Species,' 'Suggestions to Bird Students,' 'Bird Migration,' 'Spring Arrivals,' 'Published Local Lists,' 'County Schedules,' and 'Classification.' The remaining half of the text is given up to the birds of the State arranged in systematic order, every species being concisely described, and concerning many of them is found also a wealth of original information, classified under the headings 'Field Marks,' 'Distribution,' 'Migrations,' 'Haunts and Habits,' 'Nest and Eggs,' 'Food,' and some others. Forty-two colored plates, by Mr. L. A. Fuertes, conclude the volume.

Mr. Eaton has followed the A. O. U. Check-List in classification and in scientific names, but in the use of vernacular names he has yielded to the modern fad of discarding capitals and suppressing the possessive case.

¹Birds of New York. By Elon Howard Eaton. = Memoir 12, New York State Museum, John M. Clarke, Director, Part I. Introductory Chapters; Water Birds and Game Birds. 4to, pp. 501 (facing leaves to plates numbered as pages; 148 pp. of tabular matter, unpagged, between pp. 86 and 87), 42 colored plates, and numerous, half-tone illustrations in the text. Albany: University of the State of New York, 1910.

In birds called 'Wilson thrush' and 'Wood thrush,' for instance it would be quite reasonable to suppose both were named after persons, and where we find 'South Bay, L. I.' 'Shinnecock bay,' 'Gardiners island, L. I.,' 'East river,' 'Lewis co.,' 'Montauk Point,' 'Onondaga lake,' 'Black-throated blue warbler,' 'Long-billed marsh wren,' and so on, we may well wonder why capitals are used at all. These are, however, rather trivial matters and in no wise impair the excellence of Mr. Eaton's work the thoroughness of which is manifested in many ways. His descriptions are good, his compilations of records are well done, and his many comparative tables of spring arrivals and of analysis in parallel columns of the species of different local lists are excellent. It is rather unfortunate, though, to have had these voluminous tables printed on one side only of the sheets, for it has resulted in a solid half inch thickness of unnumbered pages, that are a sort of huge typographical Sahara wherein one wanders about seeking the oases of information. Added to the difficulty of finding one's way we are confronted by a host of unfamiliar abbreviations which are explained only at the top of Section 1, part 1. This necessitates too much thumbing of pages with fingers stuck in to keep the place, and it is a pity we could not find at the bottom of every page the meaning of such mystic symbols as 'c, fc,' 'unc,' 'ab,' 'oc,' 'tv, wv,' etc. For the convenience of those who use the tables it may also be stated that the migration lists are not numbered at all while the local list analysis sheets are arranged so that Section 1, parts 1-15, includes species from Holboell's Grebe to the White-faced Glossy Ibis; Section 2, parts 1-18, continues the list to the Short-eared Owl; Section 3, parts 1-21, carries it to the Cardinal; and Section 4, parts 1-21, completes it.

Mr. Eaton has introduced the feature of giving the pronunciation and derivation of the Latin names, and the few slips noted are probably not his fault. Coues in his early 'Keys' correctly explained the *aquilus* of *Tachypetes aquilus* as an adjective, meaning "swarthy," but later when, with the feminine generic name *Fregata* it became *aquila*, he erred in introducing the idea of "eagle," which now reappears at p. 176. The *tympanum* of *Tympanuchus* at p. 376, means a drum rather than a "membrane," and at p. 316 is a misprint for *ἱμαντόπους*. On page 76, George N. Lawrence's paper is wrongly cited, both as to title and source. It was a 'Catalogue' published in the 'Annals' of the New York Lyceum of Natural History of New York, but as a rule there is little need for corrections as one turns the pages.

The printing of the volume is good and the type well chosen and clear. The coated paper, however, makes the book weigh like lead, and it is particularly vulnerable to the ravages of time, so that DeKay's quarto is likely to outlast its successor; and we believe that the photo half-tones scattered through the pages would have appeared to better advantage as separate plates.

The colored plates are faithful and often beautiful portraits of the species, and some of the bits of landscape are charming, but taken as a whole there

is something disappointing in them. Aside from the crowding of several species on the same plate, and the numerous different reductions from the natural size of the birds, details for which the artist cannot be held responsible, there is also something wrong with the perspective. The birds are apparently too large for the landscapes or, to put it the other way, the landscapes are too small for the birds, as the human eye really sees them under ordinary conditions in nature. With our faces to the ground within a few inches of a Woodcock, he no doubt would look like plate 31, and the landscape of plate 2 would appear lovely if a group of Loons were not swimming on the very tips of our noses. Compare these compositions with the charming Pintails of plate 15, or the Hooded Mergansers of plate 11, where the disproportion of birds and landscapes is reduced to a minimum and every stroke of the artist's brush is pleasing. Bird artists of late years have been made victims of the popular demand for pictures showing birds as well as their surroundings at the same time and personally the reviewer is of the opinion that this combination is rarely successful and that the plates of long ago when devoid of background are more dignified and effective than any of the modern efforts to combine in one picture things that are really incompatible.— J. D., Jr.

Godman's Monograph of the Petrels.¹— Part V, published in May, 1910, brings to a close the most important and one of the most needed ornithological monographs of recent years, and we heartily congratulate the author on the successful completion of this great undertaking. As stated in the Preface, for many years the author's colleague, Osbert Salvin, was engaged in amassing a large and valuable series of specimens of Petrels from all available sources, with the intention, "on the completion of the 'Tubinares' for the twenty-fifth volume of the Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum, to write a fuller account of the Petrels, and publish it as a Monograph, illustrated by coloured figures of each species; for that purpose we had some forty plates prepared by Mr. Keulemans, but Salvin's untimely death, in June, 1898, put an end to this project." Although the work was delayed for many years, in consequence of Mr. Godman's occupation with the completion of the 'Biologia Centrali-Americana,' the preparation of the plates was continued, and on the completion of that immense undertaking he turned again to this long-projected Monograph,

¹ A Monograph of the Petrels (Order Tubinares) By Frederick Du Cane Godman | D. C. L. F. R. S. | President of the British Ornithologists' Union | With hand-colored Plates | by J. G. Keulemans | Witherby & Co. | 326 High Holborn London | 1907-1910 — One Vol., large 4to, pp. (v + 381, 106 colored plates. Issued in 5 parts: Part I, December, 1907; Part II, March, 1908; Part III, September, 1908; Part IV, April, 1909; Part V, May, 1910. Edition, 225 numbered copies. Subscription price, £2 5s. per part, or £10 10s. for the whole work, if paid in advance.

For previous notices in 'The Auk' see Vol. XXV, 1908, pp. 244, 338; Vol. XXVI, 1909, pp. 95, 223.