

Forbush's Annual Report on Massachusetts Ornithology.¹—Mr. Furbush's report for 1921 is quite varied in its contents but three sections which stand out most conspicuously deal with the method by which the young of the Wood Duck escape from their nest to the ground; the present status of the gull and tern colonies on the Massachusetts coast and a monthly summary of migration and distribution for the year.

The report on the gull and tern colonies is discouraging and seems to indicate pretty clearly that the only hope for these birds lies in the establishment of breeding sanctuaries under competent protection. The Heath Hens on Martha's Vineyard we are glad to know are apparently holding their own.

The investigation of the Wood Duck problem is carried on in the same manner as that on the diving activities of water fowl above reviewed and with the same result i. e. that the testimony is contradictory and on the ground that it is all reliable we must conclude that the birds sometimes drop out of the nest and are sometimes carried by their parents in several different ways. On general principals it would seem to the reviewer that this is hardly likely. Birds usually have the same way of doing an important act of this sort and there is no attempt to distinguish between reliable observations and those which are decidedly open to question. In almost every court trial diametrically opposite evidence is presented; one side being right and the other wrong, and it is difficult to see why the same thing cannot be true in evidence of the kind presented in this report. If Mr. Forbush had selected the personal observations of men of scientific training who knew at the time of observation the importance of the problem and eliminated everything else the result would to our mind have been of more importance.

With regard to the migration record we are astonished that such a report should be seriously presented by a state ornithologist. We know from personal experience what a large proportion of the records submitted by a miscellaneous lot of observers has to be ignored in preparing a record of scientific value, but from the records submitted to Mr. Forbush apparently nothing has been omitted, with the result that the report must needs be wholly ignored in making any compilation for future lists etc. When such birds as Western Tanager, Arkansas Kingbird, Black-headed Grosbeak and Snowy Heron are recorded from Massachusetts with no mention of the locality or observer and only a general mention of the date, and six records of the Blue Grosbeak from Maine and Massachusetts and a flight of Blue Gray Gnatcatchers from New Jersey to Canada are mentioned with no details we can hardly believe that the compiler expects that this portion of his report is to be taken seriously. Just as soon as we begin to

¹ The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Agriculture. Annual Report of the Division of Ornithology for the year 1921. By Edward Howe Forbush, Director. Boston, 1922. Reprint of a part of the annual Report of the Dept. of Agriculture for the year ending Nov. 30, 1921. pp. 1-41, three plates.

collect sight records from a large number of people with whose "personal equation" we are not familiar, we are forced to the alternative of hurting their feelings by ignoring improbable records not properly substantiated or of pleasing them by printing their records and thereby rendering our publication untrustworthy from the scientific standpoint. We have tried to discourage the publication of doubtful records and must admit that the task is a hard one and that the pages of 'The Auk' are not blameless but we always insist upon full data and the name of the responsible person. In view of all that has been said and written of late on the greater need of care and forbearance in the publication of unusual sight records it is discouraging to find such careless work in such high places.—W. S.

Witherby's Handbook of British Birds.¹—A double number of this important book, which is rapidly approaching completion, is before us, covering the Grebes, Loons, Doves, Sand Grouse and most of the Limicolae. The general plan and character of the work has been fully discussed in the reviews of the earlier parts and it only remains to say that the present installment is fully up to the standard of its predecessors. There are two half-tone plates of the downy young of various species and numerous text figures of bills, heads, wings etc.

Following the English custom the name *Podiceps* is used for the Grebes and *Colymbus* for the Loons following the designation of Gray 1855. (see antea p. 147.)

The generic standard is very conservative as may be seen from the fact that *Eudromias*, *Pluvialis*, *Oxyechus*, *Charadrius* and other less generally recognized genera are united under the last name while *Pelidna*, *Canutus* and *Erolia* are combined under *Calidris* the latter dating from "Anonymous" 1804 where it is based on the Knot. For the Sanderling *Crocethia* is employed, while under *Tringa* we find the species of *Actitis* and *Totanus*.—W. S.

Mathews' 'The Birds of Australia.'²—Volume ten of this great work begins with the genus *Sericornis* and follows with *Tasmanornis*, *Oreoscopus* and *Acanthorhis*, which have been split off from the former genus as originally understood, and a beginning is made on the genus *Malurus*, comprising the beautiful Blue Wrens so characteristic of the Australian avifauna. Several subspecies are described as new: *Sericornis laevigaster tweedi* (p. 16) Tweed River; *S. magnirostris yorki* (p. 19) Cape York; *S. maculatus inopinatus* (p. 28) New South Wales; *S. m. gouldianus* (p. 28) South Australia; and *Tasmanornis humilis archibaldi* (p. 38) North Tasmania. The author's peculiar ideas on nomenclature are well illustrated on page 1 where he erects a new subgenus *Megathiza* for the bird he calls *Sericornis magnirostris keri*, in order to emphasize the fact

¹A Practical Handbook of British Birds. Edited by H. F. Witherby. Parts XIV–XV. Vol. II, pp. 449–624. Sept. 6, 1922.

²The Birds of Australia. By Gregory M. Mathews. Vol. X. Part I. September 28, 1922, pp. 1–56 with six plates.