

After supper I visited the town market and saw strings of wheelbarrows loaded with Woodcock; all they could haul. The birds were so weak that they had fallen victims to men and boys with sticks. All were unfit for market and had to be thrown away.

How many of these noble game birds perished in this way and at the hands of gunners, I cannot say; but that the number ran far into the thousands at this one place, there is not room for doubt. Indeed the number offered to that market ran into the thousands. Woodcock came perilously nigh to total extinction.

Wild Turkeys and Partridges suffered little; probably Ducks escaped with minimum loss; but wild life as a whole received a staggering blow.—  
JAMES HENRY RICE, JR., *Wiggins, S. C.*

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### RECENT LITERATURE.

**Griscom's 'Birds of the New York City Region.'**—As is well known Mr. Ludlow Griscom has for some years been studying the possibilities of sight identification with the idea of eliminating so far as possible errors in field observations. He is not alone in this work as its importance is at once recognized by all students of living birds, but he has taken a leading part in it, and results are beginning to show in the mention in our books of field marks by which a bird at some distance may be recognized, in addition to the older type of description based upon specimens which can only be used satisfactorily when the bird is in the hand. Mr. Griscom has also been making an intensive study of the bird life about New York City and the little volume before us<sup>1</sup> combines the results of both of these investigations. It is one of the handbook series of the American Museum of Natural History and is published by that institution in cooperation with the Linnaean Society of New York, taking the place of similar Museum publications on the local avifauna by Dr. F. M. Chapman, published in 1894 and 1906.

Mr. Griscom's method of treatment is admirable. An introductory paragraph presents some general facts concerning each species, often with pertinent points regarding its identification in the field. Then follow several more detailed paragraphs on its occurrence on Long Island, in other portions of New York within the area covered, and in the northern portions of New Jersey. These again are subdivided for several localities where intensive studies have been carried on by the author or some of his collaborators. For Orient, Mastic and Long Beach, Long Island; the Bronx region and Central Park, and sometimes Staten Island, New York;

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<sup>1</sup> *Birds of the New York City Region.* By Ludlow Griscom, Assistant Curator of Ornithology. With the cooperation of the Linnaean Society of New York. The American Museum of Natural History Handbook Series, No. 9. New York, Published by the Museum. 1923. pp. 1-400, 6 plates, 30 figures and a map. Price \$1.00, post paid \$1.05.

and Englewood, New Jersey. Mr. Griscom has omitted from his territory those parts of the fifty-mile circle, usually regarded as bounding the 'New York Region,' from which he had no detailed data, such as Rockland, Putnam and Orange Counties, N. Y., and those parts of New Jersey which lie south of Sandy Hook and the Raritan River, and also western Connecticut which has been so thoroughly covered in a special publication on the birds of that state.

The vast amount of sight records and published information that the author has had to review in preparing such a list as the present can only be appreciated by those who have had similar work to do, and the elimination of the probable errors is a difficult and thankless task. All of this, however, Mr. Griscom has done with admirable judgment and the result is the most satisfactory local treatise that we have seen. In cutting away from many of the traditional requirements of the last generation and considering primarily the needs of the host of present day field students it sets a standard and example for what, as we have said elsewhere, might be termed the "new ornithology."

The nomenclature wisely follows that of the A. O. U. 'Check-List' although there is some inconsistency in the duplicating of the specific name in the so-called typical subspecies. The vernacular names are very properly given prominence both in position and typography, for they are the names that the bulk of local field students will use. The illustrations consist of well selected half-tones from various sources and several colored plates from the 'Educational Leaflets' of the National Association of Audubon Societies, in which unfortunately the printer has allowed the red tint too much prominence. Attention might also be called to a slip in the title of fig. 10 where the Virginia Rail appears as the Sora, but the book is remarkably free from errors, typographical or otherwise.

The introduction is an especially good piece of work. The life zones of the region are very carefully analyzed and the difficulty in delimiting them clearly brought out. The seasonal variation in bird life is then considered in great detail with the result that we have the species grouped as follows: Permanent Residents 37, Summer Residents 89, Summer Visitants 6, Winter Visitants 30, Irregular Winter Visitants 20, Regular Transients 78, Irregular Transients 21, Casual Visitants 18, Accidental Visitants 66 and Extinct or Extirpated Species 12—a total of 377 species and subspecies. A detailed list of the extirpated species and of 13 of hypothetical occurrence is given in an appendix.

The account of the migrations is perhaps the most important part of the introduction. The season is considered month by month and the successive "waves" described, the spring migrants being arranged in ten groups showing those which habitually travel together. An interesting point in this connection is that today all birds seen in Central Park are migrants, and just as the reviewer has noticed in similar spots in the city limits of Philadelphia, migrating individuals will be seen here long after others

of the same species are settled for the summer in the surrounding country districts, showing that the movement often continues long after we are able to detect it in the open country.

Under "changes in bird life" the author speaks feelingly of the decrease, in many species; of the "improvements" which convert marsh-land breeding haunts of countless birds into city slums as the great metropolis stretches its tentacles out into the country; and the disappearance of breeding birds from city parks. The brighter side of the picture is the recent increase of certain birds due to better protection and the acceptance by many species of the compromise, offered by our suburbs, of conditions intermediate between those of the city streets and the unspoiled country.

Mr. Griscom's book is far more than a local list and it will prove a boon to ornithologists far removed from the New York City Region—indeed it should be in the hands of all field students of the birds of eastern North America.

While neither Mr. Griscom nor the writer oppose the collecting of birds when science requires it, we realize that the necessity for collecting in the eastern states at least, has been greatly lessened. Moreover we shall need in the future for our studies of migration, distribution and behaviour, vast stores of data, far more than could possibly be secured by the collecting of skins and for much of which skins would be useless. These data must come from studies of the living bird and identification of the bird must be rendered as free from error as possible. Powerful binocular glasses now bring the birds reasonably close and constitute the instrument for the work and it remains to teach the observer what characters to look for under these conditions and how to use his collected data for the best interests of ornithology. Toward these ends Mr. Griscom's little book points the way and we congratulate him upon an important piece of work well done.—W. S.

**Wardlaw Ramsay's 'Guide to the Birds of Europe and North Africa.'**—This little volume<sup>1</sup> fills one of the most conspicuous gaps in ornithological literature. For years we have had inquiries for some handbook in English that might enable bird students visiting continental Europe or the Mediterranean countries, to identify the birds that they saw. There seemed to be nothing in any language except Hartert's larger work 'Die Vögel der palaarktischen Fauna' or the still larger Dresser's 'Birds of Europe,' books which were out of the question, both on account of bulk and cost, but here we have just what people have been asking for.

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<sup>1</sup> Guide to the Birds of Europe and North Africa. By Colonel R. G. Wardlaw Ramsay, President of the British Ornithologists' Union, 1913-1918. Fellow of the Zoological Society. With a Biographical Memoir by William Eagle Clarke, LL.D. Gurney and Jackson, London: 33 Paternoster Row. Edinburgh: Tweeddale Court. 1923. i-xi + 1-355. Price 12 shillings 6 pence net.