

RECENT LITERATURE

Henderson's 'The Practical Value of Birds.'¹—There have been many books dealing with economic ornithology but none we think that has more thoroughly covered publications on the subject than Mr. Henderson's volume¹ on the 'Practical Value of Birds.' As the author truly says: "the literature . . . is so scattered as to be practically unavailable to the general student or busy teacher, who desires a good fund of accurate knowledge of the more important facts," and adds that, "this volume is an effort to analyze and digest the North American literature of the subject." The amount of material available is enormous. There have been hundreds of special pamphlets issued by the U. S. Biological Survey and reports of various State agricultural departments and Audubon Societies together with the host of scattered notes in the numerous ornithological and nature study magazines. It is no small matter to compile and digest this material and this Mr. Henderson has done with remarkable thoroughness. As a slight test the reviewer, recalling certain scattered notes that he has published from time to time and that might pertain to such a work, looked them up and found every one referred to by the author. Moreover as in the case of all citations in Mr. Henderson's book, foot note references put one at once in touch with the original sources of the information. Some writers think this a waste of time and space but it has always seemed to us of the utmost importance. Mr. Coward, for example, in his little work on the 'Migration of Birds' refers to an account of the destruction of birds in a conflagration published by the present reviewer (Auk, 1906, p. 249) but fails to give the reference. Mr. Henderson quotes from Coward but, had the reference been given, could have put his readers in touch with the original article.

Mr. W. L. McAtee, the well known authority on economic ornithology, commenting on Mr. Henderson's book writes us "We know only one important work that could have been, but is not included; namely, 'A Biological Survey of the Pribilof Islands' (N. A. Fauna 46, 1923) which contains more information on the food of Pacific waterfowl than is available elsewhere. Checking up with Collinge's 'The Food of Some British Wild Birds,' the other recently published bibliography of economic ornithology, we find that neither is absolutely complete even for the papers of economic ornithologists. For instance the following numbers of papers are cited for various authors (the number in Collinge first, Henderson second); Forbes 10, 4; Forbush 21, 10; Wetmore 2, 10; Judd 10, 9; Fisher 9, 14; Bryant 15, 19; Beal 28, 24; and McAtee 24, 43."

Mr. Henderson divides his work into two parts. I. General Discussion and II. Systematic Discussion. Under the first heading are considered:

¹The Practical Value of Birds. By Junius Henderson, Professor of Natural History and Curator of Museum, University of Colorado. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1927, pp. i-xii + 1-342. \$2.50.

The Ethical and Practical Value of Birds; Crops and Forests Saved by Birds; Sense versus Sentiment; Balance of Nature; Correlation of Structure with Food Habits; The Function of Birds in Nature; Complete Protection not Desirable; Quantity of Food Required by Birds; Methods of Investigation; Birds as Enemies of Injurious Insects, Man and Plants; Birds as Scavengers and as Disease Carriers; Destruction of Birds; Remedies. Under Part II the various families of birds are covered in the order of the A. O. U. 'Check-List' with the principal food of each. For the Passeres alone there are 478 foot note references. A bibliography and good index complete the work. Longfellow's 'Birds of Killingworth, a poem apparently not often read, is quoted to good effect and those who vow vengeance on the Crow may well take notice of the poet's early appreciation of the value of this maligned bird:

"Even the blackest of them all, the Crow,
Renders good service as your man at arms,
Crushing the beetle in his coat of mail
And crying havoc on the slug and snail."

—W. S.

Nicholson's 'How Birds Live.'—The object of this little book¹, the author explains, is to digest all recent theories and to give briefly and simply an outline of the views of bird life reached by modern observation. He moreover makes no attempt to "follow tradition and embellish his text with the strange behaviour of the Hoatzin, Birds of Paradise or the Frigate Bird of Christmas Island" nor does he "propose to invoke ice ages, land bridges or other infernal machinery."

On the contrary he presents a series of interesting sketches on territory, migration, song, etc., bringing in his own criticisms of the theories of others and taking his examples mainly from the common British birds. Our only criticism would be that the book is too English in that no mention is made of the work and theories of American and other writers who have contributed equally to our present knowledge of the subjects under discussion. For example we find no mention of the work of Watson, Cooke and Wetmore on migration, nor of Mousley's article on territory which appeared simultaneously with Howard's. In treating broad phenomena of Nature one cannot be so exclusive.

The chapter headings of the book are Ecology; Struggle for Existence; Territory Theory; Bird Song; Courtship; and Migration, while there are appendices covering General Character of Bird Activity; Number of Eggs Reared; Height at which Birds Fly; Speed; and Bibliography. The last as already indicated consists of English works only.

¹ *How Birds Live. A Brief Account of Bird Life in the Light of Modern Observation.* By E. M. Nicholson. London, Williams and Norgate, Ltd. 14 Henrietta St., Covent Garden, W. C. 2., 1927, pp. i-x + 1-139. Price 3 shillings 6 pence, net.