

Bent's 'Life Histories of the Gallinaceous Birds.'—Mr. Bent's great series of Life Histories goes steadily on. Eight volumes have been devoted to the water birds and in the ninth,¹ now before us, he covers the Grouse, Quail, etc., and the Pigeons.

The method of treatment follows the same excellent plan established in the earlier volumes and an astonishing amount of information is presented, including judicious extracts from the published literature, which the author seems thoroughly to have mastered, and original matter supplied by his many correspondents and drawn from his own wide experience.

The problem of subspecies, which were but few in number among the water birds, had to be solved in the present volume and the author's method is "to give as full a life history as possible of the best known subspecies and to avoid duplication by writing briefly of the others," giving only their characters, ranges and any peculiar habits. This seems eminently satisfactory; indeed no other method could be tolerated; subspecies differ from one another by every degree of difference and to ignore them all would be to omit birds that are generally recognized by the public as distinct "kinds" while to write fully of every race would involve endless duplication. A work of this sort must adopt degree of difference as its criterion even though our technical nomenclatural divisions are based on presence or absence of intergradation.

The nomenclature follows the new A. O. U. 'Check-List'—another sensible practice in a work of this sort. Mr. F. C. Lincoln is largely responsible for the compilation of the ranges and Drs. C. W. Townsend, Tyler, Gross and A. A. Allen have contributed biographies, while the late F. C. Willard arranged the data on egg dates and measurements.

The illustrations are mainly of nests and young birds but a number represent adults also; they are almost all from photographs and are reproduced in half-tone and printed on both sides of heavy plate paper. Perhaps the most striking are those of the Ptarmigan and the Sage Hen in display, and the fighting Sharp-tailed Grouse and Prairie Chickens.

Mr. Bent reminds his readers that this series of volumes constitutes a coöperative work and if anyone "fails to find anything that he knows about the birds he can blame himself for not having sent in the information!"

We realize the difficulty that the author has faced in trying to find a term that would cover all the birds included in this volume but the use of the word "Gallinaceous" to cover both the Galliformes and the Columbiformes seems to be stretching it beyond the usually accepted limits; indeed the 'Century Dictionary' in defining it distinctly excludes the pigeons. Once more we take pleasure in congratulating Mr. Bent upon the completion of another step in his gigantic undertaking.—W. S.

¹ U. S. National Museum Bull. 162 | Life Histories of North American Gallinaceous Birds | Orders Galliformes and Columbiformes | By Arthur Cleveland Bent | Taunton Massachusetts | (seal) | Smithsonian Institution | Washington | D. C. Pp. i-xi + 1-490 pll. 1-93. Price \$1.00. Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.