

## RECENT LITERATURE.

**Allen's 'American Bird Biographies.'**<sup>1</sup>—We have had occasion frequently to call attention to the admirable "bird autobiographies" written by Dr. A. A. Allen for 'Bird-Lore' and it is a satisfaction to have twenty of these published in book form under the above title. Dr. Allen's happy thought of having the birds speak for themselves presents the information to the reader in a most attractive form while he cleverly embodies in the accounts the results of his own wide experience, together with what may be necessary from the work of other reliable writers, to make the life-histories complete.

The wealth of illustrations, provided through the author's well known ability with the camera, is greatly enhanced by twenty beautiful reproductions of paintings by Dr. George M. Sutton—ten in colors and ten wash drawings in black and white. The color plates which portray the Scarlet Tanager, Baltimore Oriole, Belted Kingfisher, Bluebird, Green Heron, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Flicker, Redstart, Robin and Goldfinch offer the artist a wonderful opportunity of which he has taken full advantage and has produced some of the best of his many excellent bird paintings. The selection of the subjects is well made and presents birds of varied types and at the same time species well known to all. We heartily recommend Dr. Allen's book not only to the young ornithologists who desire instruction put in an attractive form, but to the older bird students who are looking for reliable information on various phases of bird life.—W. S.

**Saunders Guide to Bird Song.**—With the increasing interest in bird study we must needs have books treating in detail of particular phases of the subject. Migration, field identification, etc., have already received such attention and now Mr. Aretas Saunders, for many years past a specialist on bird song, gives us this excellent guide<sup>2</sup> to his favorite branch of ornithology. His little book on 'Bird Song' published by the New York State Museum has already been noticed in these columns (Auk, 1929, p. 403). In that work he discussed song from many points of view and now presents a 'Guide' by which others may recognize the songs of the birds of north-eastern United States. He has had many years' experience as a teacher in trying out different methods for making a description of a song that will be identifiable when the real song is heard, by one who has never heard it before. He finds that while the syllabic method is good, it is best not to use actual words as they often induce wrong accent or emphasis, and he therefor uses vowels or vowels and consonants in combinations which resemble no words in any language. To supplement this, and indeed more important than the syllables, he has devised a scheme of horizontal dashes, whose length represents the length of the note and the thickness of which indicates the volume. When notes are distinct so are the dashes, but when connected then the dashes are connected by vertical lines, and when slurred by curved lines. A study of the graphs which are presented for each species will show how readily one can grasp the method, while the syllables directly below show the character of the

<sup>1</sup> American | Bird Biographies | Containing the complete life-histories of | familiar birds | written in autobiographical form | By Arthur A. Allen, Ph.D. | \* \* \* \* | with ten color plates and | ten wash drawings By George Miksch Sutton | and 190 photographs of the birds in nature | by the author. Comstock Publishing Company, Inc. | Ithaca, New York | 1934. Pp. i-ix + 1-238. Price \$3.50.

<sup>2</sup> A Guide | to Bird Songs | Descriptions and Diagrams of the Songs | and Singing Habits of the Land Birds | of Northeastern United States | By | Aretas A. Saunders | Author of "Bird Song" | D. Appleton-Century Company | Incorporated | New York, London | 1935 | Pp. i-xvii + 1-285. Price \$2.50