

RECENT LITERATURE.

Allen's 'American Bird Biographies.'¹—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 guide² 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

¹ 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.

² 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

note—liquid, sibilant, etc. A letter at the left of each chart indicates the actual musical pitch at that point—A''' etc., while each eighth of an inch in vertical height represents a half-tone and each half inch horizontally a second in time.

Accompanying each description of a song there is a very brief description of the bird, bringing out clearly its chief color characteristics, and at the beginning of the book an ingenious "Key" which leads one to one or other of the 26 groups into which bird songs are divided, while further keys bring us down to the species.

Mr. Saunders does not consider musical notation at all, as he rightly claims that it is unsuited to bird song since birds make use of musical intervals not capable of indication in our system of music. He also omits any attempt at a scientific analysis of bird notes such as Mr. Brand has discussed recently (Auk, 1935, pp. 40-52) since the present work is intended wholly as a guide for the field student.

Mr. Saunders has, we think, produced the best book on bird song from the popular point of view that has yet been published. It is a difficult subject to present and the attempts at representation by words from human speech or by musical notation have been, with the exception of a few striking songs, almost total failures.

We commend this little book to all bird students.—W. S.

Herrick's 'The American Eagle.'—It was our pleasure, some years ago, to publish in these columns a series of most interesting articles on the life-history of the Bald Eagle by Prof. Herrick, based upon his painstaking studies of the bird at several eyries in northern Ohio. (cf. Auk for 1924, 1932 and 1933). Now we have all of the information there presented, with much additional matter, combined in book form,¹ with the same and other illustrations from photographs taken by the author from the special steel tower erected near the nest tree.

Prof. Herrick has given us one of the most thorough life-history studies yet published on any species of American bird and has presented it in a form that will attract the interest not only of the ornithologist but of anyone who likes to read of nature and of determination in carrying out a planned investigation in the face of many obstacles.

Beside the studies at the Eagle's nest the author has added accounts of the Eagle as an emblem in ancient and modern times as well as the history of its adoption as our national bird and of its use on our coins, an interesting chapter in the history of the United States, in which Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Daniel Webster played a part.

Prof. Herrick has certainly earned the title of the "biographer of our national bird!"—W. S.

Wynne-Edwards on the Birds of the North Atlantic.—This valuable and extremely interesting report² is based primarily upon eight voyages between Montreal and the English Channel on R. M. S. *Ascania* from May to September, 1933. The systematic portion of the publication covers observations on 28 species with much discussion of their distribution and migration, many of them illustrated with pen sketches by the author and by maps.

While these accounts make up the bulk of the paper the introductory portion is perhaps even more interesting. Here the author contrasts the study of the birds of a land area and of a section of the ocean and emphasizes the impossibility of a reasonably prolonged residence in the latter, which is always regarded as a necessity in the

¹The American Eagle | A Study in Natural and Civil History | by Francis Hobart Herrick | Author of "Audubon the Naturalist" | D. Appleton-Century Company | Incorporated | New York, London | 1934 | Pp. i-xx + 1-267. Price, \$3.50.

²On the Habits and Distribution of Birds of the North Atlantic. By V. C. Wynne-Edwards. Proc. Boston Soc. Nat. Hist., Vol. 40, No. 4, pp. 233-346. pll. 3-5. January, 1935.