

RECENT LITERATURE

Cutright's 'Great Naturalists Explore South America.'—The scope of this notice¹ is limited to consideration of the sections of this book which are specifically of ornithological interest. These include pages 156 to 215 inclusive, and, in conformity with the general plan of the remainder of the volume, they comprise composite accounts of a number of species of birds compiled from published records of observations of various naturalists, who, over a period of years from 1799 to date, have made explorations in South America. Among the principal authors from whose writings these summaries are gleaned may be mentioned Alexander von Humboldt, Charles Waterton, Charles Darwin, Richard Schomburgk, William Henry Edwards, Alfred Russel Wallace, H. W. Bates, William Henry Hudson, Frank M. Chapman, L. E. Miller, Robert Cushman Murphy, William Beebe, George K. Cherrie, Theodore Roosevelt, Alexander Wetmore, and others. Several of the more interesting and important birds are thus discussed at some length, notably: the Golden Plover, the Arctic Tern, the Rhea, the Condor, the albatross, the Hoatzin, the toucan, the hummingbird, and the Cock-of-the-rock. There are included such topics as habits, food, range, flight, function of bill, speed of wings and the like. Considerable descriptive and highly interesting material has been quoted from various of these authors concerning the spectacular dance of the Cock-of-the-rock; evidence concerning methods used by the vulture in locating food through smell or otherwise; experiments conducted relative to the speed of wings of hummingbirds—"those glittering fragments of the rainbow;" the unusually potent emanations or odors from the Hoatzin; the part played by the Condor in destroying guano-producing birds, and the like. Particularly interesting are the sections dealing with bird migration between North and South America; light as a factor in migration; sense of direction or how birds find their way; and speed at which birds can travel. Space limitations here forbid enumeration of all the various species of birds considered, particularly in the migratory studies, though these include such forms as heron, ibis, gallinule, Barn Swallow, Purple Martin, Pintail, Baldpate, Golden-eye, Blue-winged Teal, Hudsonian and Eskimo Curlew, sandpiper, snipe, Northern Phalarope, Franklin's Gull, Bobolink, Redstart, Upland Plover and the like. Of deep interest is the general discussion of present-day South America and its possibilities from the viewpoint of the naturalist and the explorer, and very helpful are the thumb-nail biographical sketches presented of the greater number of the workers already enumerated above. Only a deep personal interest in the subject could have prompted the compiler to assemble this unique array of material, for it covers not only extensive geographic range but also a long period of time. All students of South American fauna will enjoy reading this exceedingly interesting and valuable compilation, and will be grateful to Dr. Cutright for the very considerable toil and pains spent in its preparation.—J. S. WADE.

Archbold and Rand's 'New Guinea Expedition, 1936-1937' is the narrative of the second journey to New Guinea, undertaken by Archbold in the interests of the American Museum of Natural History. As a result of the experience gained on his first expedition, he had concluded that the little-known interior might be explored with the help of an airplane, for hitherto the difficulties of foot travel, the

¹ Cutright, Paul Russell. *The Great Naturalists explore South America*. 8vo, 340 pp., 42 pls., 1940; Macmillan Co., New York City. \$3.50.

scarcity of native trails, and especially the lack of available food have constituted almost insurmountable difficulties in the way of collecting and exploration at any distance from the coast.

The Fly River of south-central New Guinea was selected as the field of work for the new expedition, and a base station was established at Daru on the coast near the river's mouth. Rand was in charge of ornithological work, G. H. H. Tate was to collect mammals, and L. J. Brass was the botanist of the expedition. The plan was for Tate and Brass, with fifty-five carriers and police 'boys' to ascend the river by a small steamer to a base camp some six hundred miles in from the mouth, where later Rand joined them by the plane. An advance party was to proceed up the river to the mountain barrier inland, and look out a route to these highlands and camp sites where provisions could be dropped to the men by parachute from the airplane. Portable radio sets kept the three parties in daily communication with one another. For two months all went well, when a heavy storm on the coast wrecked the airplane at her moorings. This disaster necessitated calling in the field parties, who by constructing a flotilla of rafts managed to get back downstream to a point where the river steamer could pick them up with their precious collections. That they all came through without mishap is proof of the skill and resourcefulness of the men.

The book¹ gives a straightforward account of the journey, the country and its people, with many incidental notes on the birds seen or collected, of which presumably a more particular account will later appear. Since then the leader of this expedition has led a third and contemplates a fourth. The scientific results of this work when published in full, should add much to our knowledge of the animal and plant life of this great island.

The book makes interesting reading and gives one a clear idea of the difficulties in the explorer's path who would penetrate to the mountainous interior. One of the world's least-known areas only a few years ago, New Guinea is rapidly becoming fairly well collected as to its avifauna at least.—G. M. ALLEN.

Dr. T. S. Roberts's 'Annals of the [Minnesota] Museum of Natural History' is a most interesting account of the development of the Museum of the University of Minnesota from small beginnings to an institution of importance. The introductory chapter briefly outlines the Museum's history which is further amplified by the inclusion of Dr. Roberts's annual or biennial reports to the President from 1918 to the present, as a method of giving a retrospect of its progress and growth. In 1872, the State legislature passed a bill creating the Geological and Natural History Survey of Minnesota and directed that a museum should be established at the University. Professor N. H. Winchell was made the first head of the survey. In 1877, when Dr. Roberts entered the university as a freshman, the exhibitions, largely geological, were contained in a single room of one of the university buildings. Twelve years later, the growing collections were moved to larger quarters in the new Science Hall, and their continued development soon necessitated various other moves, until at the present time a fine new building, made possible largely through the generosity of Mr. James F. Bell, is about ready as the permanent home of the Museum. In this healthy growth one may read between the lines that much of its progress and increasing usefulness has resulted from the devotion, good judgment and broad scientific interest of Dr. Roberts, who

¹ Archbold, Richard, and Rand, A. L. *New Guinea Expedition / Fly River Area, 1936-1937* / 8vo, xviii + 206 pp., folding map, illustr., 1940; Robert McBride & Co., New York City. \$5.50.

for twenty years has been its Director. From the poorly organized miscellany that characterized the earlier type of natural-history museum, it has under his care advanced steadily to become an important and vital factor in both public and university education. Always hampered by inadequate funds, as museums normally seem to be, progress has of necessity been slow, yet under wise management and insistence upon quality rather than quantity, the well-chosen exhibits and extensive study collections have proved of wide attraction and value.

The collection of birds comprises many habitat groups and smaller portable cases for school use, several thousand study skins, including Dr. Roberts's private collection donated by him, as well as other collections both local and general, from various sources. Of interest among the exhibits is a group showing a pair of Passenger Pigeons, with an authentic nest and egg, collected many years ago.

The report¹ includes several interesting portraits of those associated with the Museum's history, as well as many cuts illustrating its collections and activities, and it is thoroughly indexed. As a record of the Museum's development, the scope of its collections, its progress and increasing usefulness in the community, this volume of its 'Annals' provides an outstanding example of what may be accomplished with slender resources under wise and devoted management.—G. M. ALLEN.

'Publications of the British Trust for Ornithology, Volume I,' comprises a gathering of twenty-three reprints of articles published mainly in 'British Birds' and the 'Journal of Animal Ecology' from 1935-39. These deal with various inquiries carried out under the recently established British Trust for Ornithology, administered from Oxford University. The subjects investigated include population studies of British heaths and moorlands; habits, color variation and censuses of the Short-eared Owl at Newcastleton; a comparative study of the breeding and other habits of the Common Swallow and the House Martin in the British Isles; the index of heron populations and its variation over the period of years; an investigation on the status and economic value of the Little Owl; Lapwing habitats; the migration of the Gannet in Great Britain; the destruction of buds of trees and shrubs by birds; the status of the Bridled Guillemot; and others.

Notwithstanding that the Trust is still in its experimental stage and has very limited funds at its disposal, it has the advantage of being able to carry out special studies over significant terms of years or to take up questions of economic importance which an individual investigator would seldom be able to carry on equally well if he had to depend on his private resources. In addition to sponsoring a varied program of research, the Trust is now headquarters for the extensive bird-banding work being carried on in the British Isles. The present sheaf² of collected papers, with special title pages, forms a substantial volume of tangible results already obtained that more than justify the original plan.—G. M. ALLEN.

Delacour, Greenway, and others on Birds of Indo-China.—The current issue of 'L'Oiseau, et la Revue Française d'Ornithologie' (new ser., vol. 10, nos. 1-2, 220 pp., 14 pls., Jan. 1, 1940) is devoted to an account of the seventh ornithological expedition to French Indo-China, undertaken in 1938-39 by M. Jean Delacour and Mr. James C. Greenway, in the interests, respectively, of the Paris Museum and the

¹ Roberts, Thomas S., M.D. *Annals of the Museum of Natural History / University of Minnesota / 1872-1939 / 8vo, Minneapolis, xxi + 183 pp., 5 pls., 38 figs., 1939.*

² *Publications of the British Trust for Ornithology / Volume I / 1935-9. t.p., 23 reprints. Obtainable from the Director, Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology, 39 Museum Road, Oxford, England. Price six shillings.*

Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge. In an introductory chapter these authors present an outline of their itinerary in Haut-Mékong, with some account of the geographical features of the country, and its peoples, with illustrations of the various types of terrain. They conclude that the avifauna of the Haut-Mékong Province is a continuation of that of northern Indo-China, but more impoverished compared with that of Tranninh and Tonkin, but with the addition of some Burmese elements as well as certain more southern forms that follow up the Mékong valley and thus extend farther north than on the coast of Annam. Especially noteworthy, is the fact that in spite of the apparently favorable aspect of the country, varied in topography, wooded, and mountainous, the avifauna of the upper Mékong seems very limited. This, the authors suggest, may be due to the absence of great massifs of high altitude or of ranges of high escarpments. Nevertheless they list 244 species or races of birds. In a separate chapter are given a number of critical notes on certain species with the description of two new races, *Potamorhinus schisticeps beaulieui* and *Aethopyga gouldiae harrietae*, in addition to those previously described from the same collection. The genus *Phylloscopus* has been studied by Mr. Ticehurst who lists no less than seventeen forms, migratory or resident. In continuation, there is included a supplementary list of the birds of Tranninh by Davis-Beaulieu, notes on certain birds of Cambodia by Engelbach, and finally a complete list of the birds of French Indo-China, by Delacour and Jabouille. This includes reference in each case to the original description and a brief statement of the general range, and totals 1010 forms, of which 71 have been added since 1931 to the list previously published. A number of handsome colored plates as well as maps and halftone figures combine to assist the reader in forming a better idea of the nature of the country and of certain of the races of birds discussed. Altogether the papers forming this issue of 'L'Oiseau' present a valuable survey of the avifauna of this interesting corner of Asia.—G. M. ALLEN.

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