

RECENT LITERATURE

Bent's 'Life Histories of North American Birds.'—This latest volume¹ of the celebrated 'Life Histories' contains the available information concerning 59 forms of parrots, cuckoos, trogons, kingfishers, goatsuckers, swifts, and hummingbirds. It follows the same plan as the previous issues, treating each species or subspecies under the topics of spring, courtship, nesting, eggs, young, plumage, food, behavior, voice, enemies, autumn, field marks, and distribution. For many species information is not available concerning various topics. Taxonomic problems are not considered.

The biographies of the several species mention many interesting facts. The discussion of the Carolina Parakeet points out the destructive feeding habits of the birds and, important in comparison with other kinds of parakeets, the probability that our species nested in colonies, sometimes apparently building large nests of sticks. There is also a short discussion of the Mexican parrot, *Rhynchopsitta*. The chapters on the two species of Ani and the Roadrunner abstract most of the available information although several references are omitted. For example, Gundlach long ago (1874) exploded the myth that the Anis lay their eggs in layers; Chapman (1938) wrote an accurate chapter on *Crotophaga ani* and Hartley (1917) studied its development. Our two North American cuckoos are discussed at length. However, the classic work of Herrick (1910) is not mentioned, although some of his extensive data are contained in the 1935 reference. The life histories of two Asiatic cuckoos by E. C. S. Baker contain much unpublished data and clearly point out the territorialism in these species. The only North American trogon is mentioned briefly. The chapters on the two Central American kingfishers add perspective to his excellent account of the Belted Kingfisher. The territorialism and long incubation period are notable. A comparison of the life histories of the Whippoorwill, Nighthawks and allies indicates the uniformity of habits within the group. A comprehensive chapter on the Chimney Swift is accompanied by chapters on the western species and on one Asiatic form. Within the group there is a striking contrast between the uniformity of flight and feeding habits on the one hand and the variation in nesting habits on the other hand.

The chapters on the hummingbirds are a most useful compilation of information. The nesting habits are uniform throughout the group. The male ordinarily does not take part in the nest activities, although there is evidence that the male Broad-billed Hummingbird incubates. Two eggs are laid by all the species discussed. The behavior of several species indicates that the male has a courtship and a feeding territory and that the female has a nesting and a food territory. Saunders' (1936) recognition of this fact is omitted. Interspecific fighting is spectacular throughout the group. Arnold's (p. 372) description of breast coition is questionable. The erroneous statement (p. 422) that "the courtship performances of the hummingbirds all follow the same general pattern" is correctly contradicted by the splendid generalizations of Skutch (p. 433) concerning the 'static' and 'dynamic' types of courtship. In static courtship the birds gather singly or in assemblies to display from one particular spot. The dynamic

¹ Bent, Arthur Cleveland. Life Histories of North American Cuckoos / Goatsuckers, Hummingbirds / and their Allies / — / Orders Psittaciformes, Cuculiformes / Trogoniformes, Coraciiformes, Caprimulgiformes / and Micropodiiformes / Bull. U. S. Nat. Mus., no. 176, viii + 506 pp., 73 pls., 1940. Price 75 cts. (Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C.)

consists of the familiar pendulum aërial display. It is of interest that no temperate species uses the static type although this type is widespread throughout Central and even South America (*Phaëthornis* and *Pygmornis*). The discussion of two tropical species by Skutch supplies much unpublished information. The chapter on the Ruby-throat describes the courtship and gives an analysis of the flight, as photographed by high-speed cameras.

Since this volume discusses several difficult families, some brief generalizations and analyses of the groups would be a desirable improvement. Further, while many of us decry the tendency to consider ornithology as no more than the study of territorialism, nevertheless the topic is of sufficient importance to merit a separate section in the life-history discussions. Thus the observations of Bullock in 1825 (p. 431) and of Henslow in 1877 (p. 416) on territorialism are obscured in the description of other topics. A refreshing feature is the wealth of data gathered from the older literature, indicating the author's familiarity with his subject. At times the point of view is too anthropomorphic. Others vie with modern authors in verbosity. The description of field marks is good, but at the present time probably superfluous in a book of this nature. The volume contains 135 excellent photographs, a detailed table of contents and an index to species and authors but not to subjects. The ten pages of bibliography unfortunately do not give the name of the publisher of the books included. This volume provides the basis for detailed life-history studies and exposes the deficiencies in our knowledge of many species.—D. E. DAVIS.

Roberts's 'Birds of South Africa' is a well-illustrated handbook¹ intended as "a simple guide to the species of birds" found south of a line from the Cunene River on the west coast to the Zambesi on the east, an area roughly 1600 miles wide and about 1000 miles in a north-south direction, and including therefore the African continent south of latitude 18°. So diverse are the local conditions in various parts of this area that no less than twenty-one minor subdivisions are defined in each of which the local climate, physiography and plant life are characteristic and support one or more endemic types of birds. This diversity of environment, with its lack of important physiographic barriers, and with a climate that imposes little need for lengthy migration, not only favors the development of geographic races of widespread species, but also makes a favorable winter home for migrants from the northern hemisphere, such as the White Stork or the Common Swallow of Europe.

The volume treats of no less than 875 distinct species, while in the case of those that divide into local races, these are separately listed under the specific form, with a few words as to their differential characters and range. For each species are given the accepted Latin name, the English and Afrikaans vernacular names, important synonyms, and the native names, often in several dialects. Dimensions in both inches and millimeters follow, together with a paragraph on the general range, habits and eggs. In lieu of descriptions, fifty-six colored plates scattered through the text at appropriate places give a visual and comparative idea of the colors, for on each plate are grouped often as many as twenty-five figures of allied species, which though of necessity small and somewhat crowded, are nevertheless so excellently reproduced that each is clear and its colors are well rendered. Thus the two plates of sunbirds show at a glance the compara-

¹ Roberts, Dr. Austin. *The / Birds of / South Africa /* 8vo, xxxii + 463 pp., 56 colored plates, 1940; H. F. & G. Witherby, Ltd., 326 High Holborn, London, W. C. 1. Price 30 shillings.

tive color characters of twenty-six species, and in most cases both sexes of each. In all, 1052 separate figures are thus included, each of which is given a number corresponding to that covering the account of the species in the text. These plates are the work of Norman C. K. Lighton, who has shown a remarkable skill in depicting and grouping so many species each in a natural if often somewhat conventional pose. There are separate indices of Latin, English, Afrikaans, and native names.

The publication of this book was made possible by subscriptions to the South African Bird Book Fund and the South African Ornithological Society. It should go a long way toward stimulating a popular interest in birds among the residents of South Africa as well as in furnishing them and the many visitors to this attractive land a ready means of identifying the host of remarkable birds they will meet with. The author's wide experience both in the field and in the study of museum specimens of South African birds gives his work a special value, for although in the recognition of genera and races, he may often show the opposite of conservatism, yet he has had the advantage of study on the spot and his views merit consideration.—G. M. ALLEN.

Peattie's 'Audubon's America.'—The fame of Audubon rests largely on his wonderful bird paintings and his 'Ornithological Biography' accompanying these folio plates. That he also made a contribution of lasting historical value in the picturesque accounts of pioneer life in his day, of his residence in New Orleans and of his visits to New England, is less generally remembered. It is the prime object of this handsome volume¹ to emphasize the latter aspect of Audubon's literary work, in order that we may have a more balanced picture of this extraordinary man. For, as Mr. Peattie rightly tells us, "the materials of history are . . . the accounts of eye-witnesses," and no writer of his time sets forth more intimately and vividly his personal impressions of America than Audubon, nor gives a better idea of frontier life of those days than he, who lived it eagerly and gloried in the still unspoiled beauty of that golden age of our fauna and flora.

Following the brief introduction, the author presents an excellent biographical sketch of Audubon, for the materials of which he acknowledges his debt to the well-known works of the late Professor F. H. Herrick and Stanley C. Arthur. On his own part, nevertheless, he shows a thorough acquaintance with the now voluminous literature relating to his subject, and supplements this study with an estimate of Audubon's personality and his competence as an observer. The seven chapters that make up the body of the volume are selections from the many sketches of contemporary life interspersed among the accounts of birds in the 'Ornithological Biography,' as well as transcripts from the less accessible journals which Audubon kept in his later years. These selections, each with a few introductory paragraphs by Mr. Peattie, include accounts of life in Kentucky, Audubon's meeting with Alexander Wilson and their mutual astonishment, his admiration for the Kentucky riflemen, his visit from that "odd fish," Rafinesque, as well as hunting tales, descriptions of pioneer types, the voyage down the Ohio and the Mississippi to New Orleans, Audubon's struggles to support himself, the Florida Keys as a bird paradise, the expedition to the forbidding Labrador coast, and the later visit to New England to procure subscriptions for his great work.

¹ Peattie, Donald Culross, ed. *Audubon's / America / the Narratives and Experiences of / John James Audubon / Large 8vo, ix + 329 pp., 17 col. pls., 1940; Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston. Price \$6.00.*

Other chapters picture the natural history of four magnificent birds from the 'Biography,' the Wild Turkey, the Whooping Crane, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker and the Carolina Parakeet, as well as life on the Dakota plains and the memorable journey up the Missouri River to Audubon's farthest west.

From these selections one gains an insight not only into the contemporary life of those widely separated parts of our continent but also into the nature of the man himself. Few have shown such versatility, such contrasts of temperament, such singleness of purpose, such unwavering courage and persistence in the face of constant discouragement. In his writing Audubon was at once vivid and vivacious, taking his reader intimately into his confidence. As an interesting sidelight Mr. Peattie recalls, however, that particularly in the conversational part of his narratives, Audubon seldom or never tries to reproduce dialect, but due probably to the formal hand of his editor, makes the runaway slave whom he met in the canebrake and the frontiersman of the Kentucky forest speak good Elizabethan English.

The volume is handsomely printed in large clear type, with generous margins to its ample pages, and is illustrated by seventeen beautiful colored reproductions of Audubon's paintings. For frontispiece is a self-portrait of the naturalist himself at the age of thirty-seven. There is a double-page panorama of Natchez in 1822, one of the few known landscapes by Audubon. The fifteen other plates, all but one in double-page size, reproduce a selection of eight of the birds and seven of the mammals from the folio works. A full index prepared by Mr. Francis H. Allen, makes the subject matter readily available, while the map on the inside cover allows the reader to follow Audubon on his journeyings. The volume is a welcome contribution to the study of Audubon's character and of the life of his day and generation, and provides for the reading public an aspect of the great naturalist that otherwise has been largely unavailable.—G. M. ALLEN.

Bond's 'Check-list of Birds of the West Indies.'—The West Indian subregion, lying almost at our doors, is one of peculiar interest to the naturalist. The origin of its fauna and flora, with many endemic species, is still a subject for active study and speculation. The present check-list¹ of its avifauna is based on the author's 'Birds of the West Indies' published in 1936, but includes much additional data on distribution and six species added during the intervening four years.

The author believes that the systematic study of West Indian birds is now almost completed in so far as the description of new insular races is concerned and in his subsequent reviews finds it necessary to reject some that are based on characters insufficient for recognition, though admitting freely that his viewpoint is not in all cases in agreement with that of other systematists. For each of the species and subspecies the Latin name is given, with the original reference and type locality, followed by a condensed statement of the range and present status. Except for the higher groups, vernacular names are omitted, which is unfortunate, for these would have made the list more readily available to the layman.

In the preface the author calls attention to the fact that within historic times more birds have "become extinct in this region than in any other part of the New World, but many more are in danger of becoming extinct in the near future." Obvious reasons for this are: primarily, man's encroachment on virgin forest and swamp-lands, indiscriminate shooting, the introduction of rats and the

¹ Bond, James. *Check-list of Birds of the West Indies*. 8vo, xi + 184 pp., map, 1940; Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia. Price \$2.00.

mongoose, the arrival in the Lesser Antilles of the Glossy Cowbird, hurricanes and natural competition between allied forms occurring together. A list is given of thirteen species that are believed to have become extinct during the last century; another thirteen "will probably become extinct within the next hundred years," while thirty-eight others are now rare or local but probably in no immediate danger. Many doubtful records are excluded as having no value. A supplementary list includes fourteen birds known from subfossil bone fragments of no great age, a second includes eleven species that have been named from "hearsay," that is, based on descriptions of birds now extinct but recorded in earlier literature, all but one of which are parrots, while finally another thirteen forms are listed as introduced and now established, such as Guineafowl, and certain African weaver finches, probably relics of slave-trading days. A number of records based on escapes or chance occurrences are summed up in a paragraph. A full index of names and a map showing the author's voyages and visits to the various islands conclude the work. Since the West Indies are not included in the area covered by the A. O. U. 'Check-list,' this volume forms a welcome and useful supplement to that catalogue.—G. M. ALLEN.

Witherby's 'Handbook of British Birds,' Volume 4.—In spite of many difficulties, and even of the death of one of the co-authors, the fourth volume¹ of this splendid manual has been completed, carrying the treatment of British birds through the cormorants, gannets, petrels, grebes, divers, pigeons, sand-grouse, waders, bustards and cranes. The volume is fully up to the high standard set by those preceding it and presents for every bird in the British list, a condensed yet full account, under the headings of habitat, field-characters and habits, voice, display and posturing, breeding, food, distribution in British Isles and abroad, migrations, followed by a detailed description of the plumages and soft parts, with a general view of allied forms.

As in previous volumes, the series of colored plates is exceptionally well executed, and though each represents four species, often with a number of figures, these are clear and the color values good. A long series of text figures illustrating differential points in closely allied forms as well as several plates showing the appearance of various shorebirds in flight are effective aids in identification.

The cooperation of many other ornithologists in preparing details for this work is acknowledged and helps to make its comprehensive accounts of particular value. The editor points out that "after a most careful study" it has been decided to adopt in this volume many of the conclusions of Dr. P. R. Lowe as to the relationships of certain groups based on his anatomical studies. The more important departures from general usage are the recognition of the cranes and bustards as a suborder (Grues) of the Charadriiformes, the regrouping of the typical waders (suborder Limicolae) and especially the changes in grouping of certain forms which Dr. Lowe shows to have definite scolopacine rather than, as formerly considered, charadriine characters, and finally the subdivision of the genus *Charadrius* itself, on the basis of skeletal characters. These changes have been conservatively made, however, and as with the rest of the work, represent the latest advances in our present knowledge of these groups.

Many of the species are American forms that occur occasionally in the British

¹ Witherby, H. F., Jourdain, F. C. R., Ticehurst, N. F., and Tucker, B. W. The Handbook of British Birds / Volume IV / . . . (Cormorants to Crane / 8vo, xiv + 461 pp., pls. 93-125, text figs., June 1940; H. F. & G. Witherby, Ltd., 326 High Holborn, London. Price separately 25 shillings.

Isles, such as the Bartramian Sandpiper, the two species of Yellowlegs (here rechristened Yellowshanks) and Killdeer; others again are common alike on both sides of the Atlantic, so that the accounts are of special value to American ornithologists as well. The many footnotes often contain the most interesting observations, such as the discussion of the source of regurgitated oily matter by petrels, now looked on as an excretory product rather than as a residue from food substances.

This series forms a compendium of accurate and up-to-date information on birds of the western Palaearctic region unsurpassed in any single work hitherto attempted and in this country is perhaps nearest approached in the volumes of Bent's 'Life Histories.' We earnestly hope that in spite of present trying conditions abroad, the fifth and final volume of this work may appear in due course.—G. M. ALLEN.

Sowerby's 'Nature in Chinese Art.'—The cultural level of a people is reflected by the interest they take in birds. Primitive races utilize them as food; then as their esthetic sense develops, birds' feathers enter into decoration, birds are kept as pets for their song and beauty, they become symbols and subjects for design, and finally sources of literary inspiration. It is therefore interesting to see the large part that birds have played in Chinese art as briefly set forth in the second chapter of this book.¹ The author, himself an artist and archaeologist, having spent most of his life in China, is well qualified to appreciate this aspect of ornithology. From the earliest times of which we have any knowledge, the Chinese have been artists of a high order and always birds seem to have been favorite subjects with them. More than any other people, the author tells us, they are bird lovers, delighting in the song and beauty of cagebirds. In their artistic representations of birds in paintings, carvings and bronzes, the Chinese are usually realists and in almost every case the species they depict can be identified, even though often these are shown in some degree of conventionalization. "Purely fabulous birds in Chinese art are almost exclusively confined to various representations of the feng huang," the so-called phoenix. This bird of course has nothing to do with the phoenix of western mythology. It is, Sowerby tells us, not a single bird but a pair, and its characters are largely derived from the Domestic Cock with features of various other Phasianidae added. Another group of bird representations includes a type with long crest and tail, and is believed by the author to be either composite or semi-fabulous. The mythology of Chinese birds is discussed and there is a list of species that the author has found depicted. Some of these, as the Mute Swan, are now rare in China; while the chance that some earlier paintings may represent species now extinct as a result of deforestation, should not be overlooked.

Other chapters of the book deal with mammals, wild and domestic, the so-called Chinese lion, reptiles, fishes, invertebrates and plants. Finally there is a useful chronological table of Chinese art by dynasties dating back to 2205 B. C. The many excellent illustrations, some in color, and the great amount of information gathered by the author during his lifelong residence in China, make this a most interesting and authoritative treatise.—G. M. ALLEN.

Belopolski's Illustrated Album of Birds of the Barents Sea is a neatly bound

¹Sowerby, Arthur de Carle. *Nature in Chinese art.* / With two appendices on the Shang pictographs / by Harry E. Gibson. 8vo, 203 pp., illustrated, 1940; The John Day Co., New York. \$3.75.

oblong booklet¹ containing fourteen colored plates by N. N. Kondakova, showing some of the more conspicuous seabirds of that arctic region—the Fulmar, Cormorant, Arctic Tern, gulls of several species, Dovekie, Murre, Puffins, loons and Eider. A page of text in Russian, giving a short account of the bird figured, faces each of the plates and there is an added list of a dozen other common arctic birds. Notwithstanding the somewhat crude reproductions and occasional misspellings of Latin names, this little book will doubtless prove useful for those of the Soviet arctic possessions as an attractive guidebook to their limited avifauna. It is notable as one of the few books hitherto published intended to stimulate popular interest in birds of northern Russia and is issued by the State Reserve for Eiders and Seven Islands Bird Mart.—G. M. ALLEN.

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¹ Belopolski, L. O. Illustrated Album of Birds of the Barents Sea. [In Russian.] 16.5 × 22.5 cm., 32 pp., 14 col. pls., 1939; Murman Government Trust, Leningrad.

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- STONER, EMERSON A. Nesting of Slender-billed Nuthatches. *The Gull (San Francisco)*, 22: 34-35, Sept. 1940.—In California.
- STONER, EMERSON A., AND GRAHAM, J. DUNCAN. Birds along the Sears Point Road in Solano County [California]. *The Gull (San Francisco)*, 22: 15-16, Apl. 1940.
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- TAVERNER, P. A. The distribution of the Western Solitary Sandpiper. *Condor*, 42: 215-217, 2 figs., July 15, 1940.—Breeds from Hudson Bay to and including Alaska, and southward from tree limits to northern British Columbia, Great Slave Lake and Churchill.
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- TICEHURST, CLAUD B. Systematic notes on Indian birds.—VII. *Ibis*, (14) 4: 523-525, July 1940.
- TICEHURST, CLAUD B. Notes on the Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus chloropus*). *Ibis*,

- (14) 4: 539-542, July 1940.—Sexual ratio is 57.7 per cent of adult males; weights and measurements also given.
- TUCKER, B. W. Francis Charles Robert Jourdain: an appreciation. *Ibis*, (14) 4: 504-518, pl. 9, July 1940.—With portrait and a bibliography.
- TUFTS, ROBIE W. Ruffed Grouse on Grand Manan Island. *Canadian Field-nat.*, 54: 89, Sept. 9, 1940.—Although absent prior to 1925, a stock was introduced in that year and the island is now well populated.
- TURBOTT, E. G. A bird census on Taranga (The Hen). *Emu*, 40: 158-161, Aug. 1940.—Census on an island of New Zealand.
- VAIDEN, M. G. Interesting Mississippi birds. *The Migrant* (Nashville, Tenn.), 11: 66-68, Sept. 1940.—With several new records for the State.
- VAN ROSSEM, A. J. Du Bus' type of the Collared Towhee, *Pipilo torquatus*. *Wilson Bull.*, 52: 173-174, Sept. 1940.—Believes the type is an "obvious hybrid between what has currently been called *torquatus* and some other *Pipilo*, probably *maculatus*," hence he revives *ocai* of Lawrence for the nominate race.
- VESALL, DAVID B. Notes on nesting habits of the American Bittern. *Wilson Bull.*, 52: 207-208, Sept. 1940.—In Minnesota.
- VRIES, V. DE. Bijdrage tot de voedselbiologie van een viertal eendensoorten, naar aanleiding van materiaal, afkomstig van Vlieland en Terschelling. *Limosa*, Orgaan d. Club van Nederl. Vogelk., 12: 87-98, Sept. 1939.—Food of Mallard, Pintail, European Widgeon, and European Teal in Holland.
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- WALKINSHAW, LAWRENCE H. A Kirtland's Warbler return. *Jack-pine Warbler*, 18: 91-92, Aug. 1940.—An adult female banded June 24, 1938, on its nest was recaptured nesting on June 23, 1940, in the same area near Lake Margrethe, Michigan.
- WATERSTON, DORA E. Humming-bird vicissitudes. *Nature Notes* (Peoria, Ill.), 7: 192-193, Aug. 1940.—On a July day, a female made its way into a house and unable to find the exit, became exhausted. The rescuer carried the bird to the next house followed closely by an adult male, which, when the female revived enough to fly, seemed to help support it in the air till both reached a maple branch "ten feet away where they rested a while before finally darting off together"!
- WATSON, FRANK G. The Little Blue Heron in the San Francisco Bay region. *The Gull* (San Francisco), 22: 37, 1940.—An adult bird seen Aug. 10, 1940.
- WEBB, JOSEPH J. Pied-billed Grebe feeding its young. *The Gull* (San Francisco), 22: 21, June 1940.—Young fed on minnows.
- WEBB, JOSEPH J. Point Lobos Reserve and Monterey Bay area. *The Gull* (San Francisco), 21: 82-83, Oct. 1939.
- WELLS, WILLIAM H. Starlings attack cattle in Kansas and other Plains States. *Oölogist*, 57: 76-77, July 1940.—In winter of 1937-38 European Starlings were seen alighting on the backs of cattle to feed on the partially extruding larvae of the ox warble; in the winter of 1939-40 when snow covered the ground this was again noted. In the same winter steers branded with an acid brand were seen to be much harassed by the birds, which alighted on the backs of the cattle, picked at scabs and made open and deep sores. With the melting of the snow the birds sought food from the ground and the trouble abated.
- WETMORE, ALEXANDER. A systematic classification for the birds of the world. *Smithsonian Misc. Coll.*, 99: no. 7, 11 pp., Oct. 10, 1940.—A revised edition with a few changes. The arrangement follows the plan that the "central group

- through which further progress may be expected," is placed at the end of the list of families.
- WHITTELL, H. M. Herman Franz Otto Lipfert. *Emu*, 40: 118-119, pl. 28 (portrait), Aug. 1940.—Account of his work as taxidermist at Western Australian Museum, Perth.
- WHITTELL, H. M., AND WHITE, S. R. The Red-tailed Tropic-bird in Western Australia. *Emu*, 40: 95-96, pl. 21, July 1940.—Breeding on the Australian mainland near Busselton.
- WINTERBOTTOM, J. M. Notes on birds observed on two voyages between Cape Town and Southampton. *Ibis*, (14) 4: 535-537, July 1940.—Especially on albatrosses and petrels.
- WOODS, GORDON T. New England hurricane benefits wildlife. *Amer. Forests*, 46: 402-404, 424, 5 figs., Sept. 1940.—By creating blowdowns and shelters, and by making open spaces where sprout growth comes in, wildlife may be favored.
- WOODS, GORDON T. Chimney Swifts destroy many insects. *Bird-banding*, 11: 173, Oct. 1940.
- WORMALD, HUGH. Bearded Tits (*Panurus biarmicus*). *Avic. Mag.*, (5) 5: 231-232, Sept. 1940.—Notes on breeding in captivity.
- WORTH, C. BROOKE. Adventures of a naturalist in Honduras. Part II. Birds of the pine forests. *Bird-lore*, 42: 323-330, 5 figs., 1940.—With notes on distribution.
- WORTH, C. BROOKE. Adventures of a naturalist in Honduras. Part III. *Bird-lore*, 42: 414-421, 3 figs., 1940.
- WORTH, C. BROOKE. Differential erosion of gastroliths in a Mourning Dove. *Bird-banding*, 11: 173, Oct. 1940.