

## RECENT LITERATURE

**William Bartram and his work.**<sup>1</sup>—In 1772, Dr. John Fothergill of London commissioned young William Bartram to undertake a journey through parts of the South for the primary purpose of collecting botanical specimens and other natural products of the region. He was instructed further to keep a record of his experiences and observations, and this task he undoubtedly performed although his journals have disappeared. His formal report, the 'Travels through North and South Carolina . . .,' first published in 1791, did not entirely please him, perhaps owing to changes made without his approval, but an intended revision was never made. Bartram did, however, send full manuscript reports to Dr. Fothergill, at least of the first two years of work, and since these are in his own handwriting, they undoubtedly represent the nearest approach to his lost journals that are available. It is these two volumes of reports that are printed here with all their inaccuracies and inconsistencies.

Because of Bartram's carelessness and his use of now unfamiliar terminology, many things in his 'Travels' have been difficult to understand. Mr. Harper has ably succeeded in unraveling the tangled threads. For a period of years he followed in person a large part of Bartram's route and he has collected and interpreted a great deal of information which is incorporated in the annotations that accompany Bartram's original account. Most of these notes are collected in a section of 'Comments,' but parts are in the form of an annotated index to the names of plants, animals, minerals, persons, localities, and the like, as used in the manuscript but here translated into current terms. A general index to the present volume is separate as are lists of literature and maps and atlases cited. The illustrations consist of reproductions of some of Bartram's original drawings, a number of maps, and modern photographs of places along Bartram's line of travel.

Many of the notes, of course, concern birds as do some of the drawings, but the general nature of Bartram's observations, covering every aspect of the country and its inhabitants, human and otherwise, makes his account of very wide interest. Mr. Harper has performed a real service in his study and interpretation of the work of one of the picturesque figures among the early naturalists of this country.—  
J. T. ZIMMER.

**Alaska Bird Trails.**<sup>2</sup>—After twenty years of urging by his friends, Herbert Brandt published about Christmas Day of 1943 a thrilling account of the adventures of an expedition by dog sled to the delta of the Yukon River at Hooper Bay. Since the days when Lucien M. Turner's 'Contributions to the Natural History of Alaska' (1886) and Dr. Edward W. Nelson's 'Report upon Natural History Collections made in Alaska' (1887) excited the enthusiasm of ornithologists, no elaborate report on the birds of the Bering Sea coast has been published. 'Alaska Bird Trails' far exceeds in importance and in the wealth of information presented any earlier publication on the birds of this region, which is fairly representative of most of northern Alaska. Although Hooper Bay is some distance south of the Arctic Circle, it is typically Arctic in its fauna and flora.

<sup>1</sup> Harper, Francis. 'Travels in Georgia and Florida, 1773-74. A report to Dr. John Fothergill. By William Bartram. Annotated by Francis Harper.' *Trans. Amer. Philos. Soc.*, n. s., 33, pt. 2, pp. 1-242, pls. i-xxvi, Nov. 29, 1943. Price \$2.00.

<sup>2</sup> Brandt, Herbert. 'Alaska Bird Trails. Adventures of an expedition by dog sled to the delta of the Yukon River at Hooper Bay.' Royal 8vo, xviii + 464, 40 pls. (12 col.), 21 text-figs., map (end-pap.), Dec. 21, 1943. The Bird Research Foundation, Cleveland, Ohio. Price \$10.00.

Mr. Brandt, a successful business man with a keen enthusiasm for ornithological exploration, spared no expense or effort in planning, organizing, and conducting what was apparently the largest and best equipped ornithological expedition that ever penetrated that almost inaccessible region. His partners in the enterprise were Olaus J. Murie, representing the Biological Survey, and H. Boardman Conover, of Field Museum of Natural History, and they were ably assisted by such experienced men as Frank Dufresne, W. C. Denny, Jack Warwick, and A. H. Twitchell. With five men working exclusively on birds and with an entire Eskimo village helping them, it is no wonder that the expedition was successful and the results impressive. Data were secured on about 1500 occupied nests and fine series were collected of some 60 species of birds.

The book is published by The Bird Research Foundation, which has spared no expense in producing a handsome volume. It will be an ornament to any library and will stir the enthusiasm of anyone interested in Arctic birds. It is generously illustrated with twelve beautiful colored plates by Major Allan Brooks and Edwin R. Kalmbach, showing some of the most characteristic birds of the region, including downy young. The downy young of the Emperor Goose and the Black Turnstone were apparently the first ever collected, and some of the others had never been figured. Mr. Brandt remarks: "In the case of our Black Turnstone plate, this seems to be the first painting published showing the subject in complete nuptial attire." The first painting of this species submitted by Major Brooks was made from specimens collected on the coast of British Columbia in mid-May, and "his birds were nearly uniformly black above, showing little of the white decorations which so enhance their beauty on the tundra during the breeding season in the latter part of May." Major Brooks had to revise this painting, as well as three others, "due to the fact that the birds apparently undergo a final plumage change of almost overnight rapidity as they approach their nesting ground or near their egg-laying time."

In addition to the colored plates, there are numerous halftone reproductions of photographs by Frank Dufresne, Olaus J. Murie, and the author; also pen sketches by C. G. Mitchell, J. R. Moody, and L. B. Towle which enrich the illustrations. A map on the back page and cover shows the route of the expedition.

The Introduction gives an interesting account of the history of Alaska, its topography, climates, and life zones, and a review of the literature on the subject. The narrative is written in diary form, relating the daily events as they unfolded and many chapters are headed by the name of some bird that was the outstanding feature of the day. The first chapter tells the story of the journey through the inside passages and overland to Fairbanks, where the party convened on March 18, 1924, and assembled their outfit. Then follow six chapters of thrilling adventure on their 850-mile trip by dog sled from Nenana to Hooper Bay, which they reached on April 28. This gruelling trip was made under Arctic winter conditions, with the temperature from 15 to 35 degrees below zero, deep snow, generally windy weather, and often howling blizzards. Fortunately, they were able to spend most of the nights in little villages, road houses, or trailside camps. An interesting feature of the trail was that each road house or small hotel had to supply a dog barn, "filled with small stalls in which each dog was segregated, and thus prevented from fighting. It is as necessary for an Alaskan hotel to have dog stables as for an eastern hostelry to have a garage." Only one splendid team of eight huskies survived the journey of nearly forty days of heavy work, with "twenty of

these days in raging Arctic storms." They used at one time or another more than ninety different dogs for transportation.

There are two chapters—interesting ones, too—describing the natural features of Hooper Bay and the habits of the primitive Eskimos living there. The headquarters of the party were at the government school, in charge of Mr. and Mrs. L. A. Ebright, and in the Eskimo village, where the natives were encouraged with tobacco and tea to hunt for nests and help in the preparation of specimens.

Two remarkable chapters are devoted to the migration of ducks and geese along the coast, which must have been most spectacular. Among all the vast hordes of wild fowl that migrated past Hooper Bay, the King Eiders far outnumbered all others. Although they were observed for only a few hours on all but four of the days from May 4 to 19, inclusive, Mr. Brandt estimated that 124,900 birds of this species passed over Point Dall during that time, and as many as 75,000 on May 15. He vividly describes the flight as follows: "Dim in the distance, over the silvery pavement of ice, a smudge of bird dust gathers. This soon evolves into dark, restless pencillings, which then in turn become a shabby, vacillating line across the sky, as onward rushes a wide wave of wild fowl, Arctic bound. Rapidly the serpentine ribbon looms and expands, bending, tilting, stretching, now wavering, then steadying, gradually enlarging, ever hastening, a twinkling rank or fearless feathered travelers in which there is no confusion, no laggard, nor yet a moment's rest. They are almost upon us; now we hear the quackings, then the deep, savage roar of a thousand throbbing wings as the powerful pilgrims thunder over and onward toward their Promised Land. Birds, birds, and more birds, by the thousands, by the tens of thousands, glorious feathered clouds on the march."

Then, of the coming of the shorebirds, he wrote on May 15: "Each marshy pond had its quota of various shorebirds, each one of which a few days before would have been to us a thrilling rarity. The mystic tundra unfolds its lavish avian wealth with bewildering rapidity." Why, he asks, do these great wanderers leave their congenial winter homes in the far south for a brief breeding season on the Arctic coast? Not for their own food, for they are fat on arrival; not for mating, for they are paired when they arrive; not because they like it, for they spend less than a quarter of the year on their breeding grounds, and they leave just as soon as possible. "There seems to be only one comprehensive answer, and that is proper food. Each tender, undeveloped baby of a given species seems to require its own strange food combination, which occurs only where some certain animal or plant life prospers."

Certain species of shorebirds were found to lay their eggs and rear their young only in definite subzonal areas, in definite types of terrain, or where definite types of vegetation prevailed.

Succeeding chapters tell in narrative form of the many interesting facts learned about the habits of the fifty-four species of birds found breeding in the Hooper Bay region. Some light is thrown upon the much discussed relationship between two of the recognized forms of the Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*). Mr. Brandt writes: "Inland, from 10 to 40 miles on the tundra, the Lesser Canada and Cackling geese are about equal in abundance, but near the coast the former is seldom found, whereas the other is plentiful. \* \* \* The Eskimos told us also that the two geese do not mate together, which if correct is good evidence that they are specifically distinct." Furthermore, he found that the nests of the two forms are quite different in structure and in the color of the nesting down. It may be recalled that the reviewer (Bull. 130, U. S. Nat. Mus., p. 231, 1925) remarked: "It is also of

interest to note that the downy young of *occidentalis* and *minima* resemble each other very closely and are quite different from the downy young of *canadensis*; this suggests the possibility of a distinct, dark-breasted, western species."

It is a well-known fact that the down taken from the nest of the eider is far superior for commercial use to that plucked from the birds of either sex at any other season, being softer, more fluffy and a poorer conductor of heat. On examining a female eider, Mr. Brandt "learned by gently pulling a single tuft of this fluffy under plumage at a time, that an occasional one was lightly inserted and was easily removable. On comparison this loose tuft appeared to be light and fluffy, just like that which was found in the nest. On the other hand, the rest of the down feathers had the roots of the shafts so deeply embedded in the skin that when forcibly removed, a bit of grease and other animal matter adhered to them. \* \* \* On the down from the nest there are no dried particles of animal matter; and as the skin of the bird showed no irritation, the nest lining process is, no doubt, painless. \* \* \* My conclusions are that the prized eiderdown taken from the nest is grown by the female bird alone, only during the breeding season, and for the sole purpose of nest lining. Thus there are evidently two kinds of down on the female at this time—the warm under plumage of downy feathers common to most birds, which we will call *permanent down*, and another which for lack of a distinctive name we propose to call *nuptial down*."

These are only a few of the interesting facts learned by this outstanding expedition, but space will not permit any further discussion of them.

A reviewer is supposed to discuss the shortcomings of a publication, but he finds little to say on this subject. It might have been better if the author had adhered strictly to the nomenclature of the 1931 Check-List, our accepted authority for the present; some of the names may never be accepted and, until they are, they had better not be used.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the most important part of the work for the working ornithologists is the Appendix, covering in 134 pages a fully annotated list of all the birds observed on the entire expedition, giving dates of arrival and full notes on haunts, nesting and other behavior, as well as very full descriptions of the eggs and downy young, and lists of the specimens of the birds collected.

A very satisfactory index completes the usefulness of the work.—A. C. BENT.

**Argentine birds.**<sup>2</sup>—This interesting work presents a series of poems in Spanish dealing with twenty-two familiar Argentine birds. It is obvious that the poet knows the birds and their ways and he treats them sympathetically. The book is dedicated to his two sons and, through them, to all children, and it would be strange if the young people of our sister republic, and older ones as well, did not derive enjoyment from this familiar treatment. A list of the species, with the local and Latin names, is appended.

The colored plates, by Salvador Magno, are lifelike portraits of the different species from which the readers of the poems should have no difficulty in recognizing their feathered friends.—J. T. ZIMMER.

<sup>1</sup> The editor heartily endorses this statement. While it is proper (although often unfortunate) to advance arguments in favor of changes from established usage, the adoption of such changes without any presentation of the evidence for or against them, defeats the efforts of nomenclaturists who are struggling to develop a stable nomenclature. In popular works or studies not concerned primarily with taxonomic revisions, the use of such debatable names only leads to confusion.—Ed.

<sup>2</sup> Burghi, Juan. 'Pajaros Nuestrros.' Demy 4to. pp. 1-118, 34 pls. (col.), 23 vignettes, 1942 [second ed.]. Guillermo Kraft Ltda., Buenos Aires.

**A biography of Walt Whitman.**<sup>1</sup>—For many years Whitman was a close personal friend of John Burroughs, as well as a contemporary and acquaintance of Henry David Thoreau. Having much in common with these men, including an appreciation of bird study, it is fitting that a brief notice be given here of this new Whitman biography. The scope of the book gives particular emphasis to the philosophy, the poetry, and the personality of this literary problem child, while comparatively slight attention is given therein to his natural history interests. Because of this, the new book may prove a bit disappointing to some of its readers. However, there appear here and there interesting and noteworthy hints and fragments, so that one may visualize the young poet as he liked to lie on the grass beneath the apple trees of his Long Island ancestral home, looking up into the sky and studying the birds and the clouds, preliminary to his 'Leaves of Grass.' Or, perhaps, we may see him leaning over the rail, busy studying the seabirds and the sunset while 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.' Again, later on, there is evident the lover of the great out-of-doors while he sings the 'Song of the Open Road.' Then too, in middle life, there are long bird rambles on holidays with his comrade John Burroughs, then a fellow Government employee, over the countryside around Washington, and there are discussions by them of many things including the identity of bird songs, particularly that of the Hermit Thrush—material afterwards used effectively by Whitman in his Lincoln poem, 'When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd.' There is likewise pathetic interest in the picture of the, by that time, aged paralytic in vain quest for health, when for four summers he would sit alone in quiet meditation through long days of bright sunshine amid the birds and flowers in the fields and woods of his friend George Stafford at Timber Creek on the Delaware near Camden, New Jersey—experiences that later were described by him in his 'Specimen Days.' This record, comments Dr. Canby, is "more interesting as biography than as nature study." Best of all, there does appear in the biography evidence of the richness of the benediction that came to the poet while he listened with soul attuned to "the mocking-bird mourning for its dead mate by the ocean shore," and learned therefrom "surcease from desire in the peace of death." Fortunate and happy indeed may be any bird student who through his studies becomes able, like the poet, to penetrate beyond the commonplace and beyond the material and to apprehend true spiritual verities.—J. S. WADE.

**Birds of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania.**<sup>2</sup>—County check-lists of birds are too often just what the name implies, mere catalogs of dates of occurrences, but in Mr. Frey's modest little book we have not only this information but also a comparison of the status of each species today with that of one hundred years ago. A century ago, Cumberland County was the home of the Bairds, Spencer F. and William M., of whom the former achieved fame as one of the great men in American ornithology. Two published lists attest to their work during this period. Mr. Frey has studied these in detail, and it has been his aim to bring up to date the ornithological knowledge of the county.

Mr. Frey's book is divided into two parts. Part I consists of a carefully annotated list of the nearly three hundred species recorded for the county, with information

<sup>1</sup> Canby, Henry Seidel. 'Walt Whitman, an American: A study in biography.' 8vo., cloth, 381 pp., 16 pl., bibliog., 1943. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston. Price \$3.75.

<sup>2</sup> Frey, Edward Snively. 'Centennial Check-List of the Birds of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, and Her Borders, 1840-1943.' 8vo, paper, pp. 1-68, 1 plate (map), 1943. Obtainable from Reverend Edward S. Frey, 517 Hummel Ave., Lemoyne, Penna. Price \$1.00.

as to relative abundance, nesting data, and seasonal occurrence. Usual arrival and departure dates are given as well as extreme dates which represent the time during which smaller numbers of individuals may be expected. There is also a description of the physical features and habitats of the county. Mr. Frey believes that Cumberland County lies partially in the Carolinian and partially in the Alleghenian life zones, and he says that in areas of the South Mountains there are strong suggestions of a Canadian element in both flora and fauna. Part II of the book consists of a reprint of Spencer F. Baird's 1845 list with brief statements as to the present-day status of each species together with comments as to changes in status, relative abundance, and local distribution which have occurred during a century. There is also a hypothetical list as well as a table showing the results of four years of hawk-migration observations at Sterrett's Gap, 1938-1941.

In the main, Mr. Frey has made carefully prepared and well-drawn statements concerning each species, but there are a few birds which it might have been the better part of wisdom to relegate to the hypothetical list, based as they are on inconclusive evidence. These species include the Barrow's Golden-eye, Swallow-tailed and Mississippi Kites, Wilson's Plover, and Smith's Longspur. Mr. Frey is entirely justified in assigning the Kirtland's Warbler to his hypothetical list, but it could just as well have been omitted, since the supposed record was based on misinformation (*cf.* Stone, *Auk* 15: 331, 1898). A bird not listed by Mr. Frey but recorded from Harrisburg, and within his two-mile limits although in Dauphin County, is the Willow Thrush (*cf.* Rothrock, *Auk*, 35: 83, 1918).

There are a regrettable number of typographical errors in Mr. Frey's book, the result of an unsatisfactory printer and editorial inexperience on the part of the author, but these minor faults are definitely outweighed by the contribution which Mr. Frey makes to our knowledge of the birds of the county and the interesting way in which the material is presented. Mr. Frey's little book is one which every serious student of bird distribution should have in his library.—ALBERT E. CONWAY, *West Chester, Pennsylvania.*

## PERIODICAL LITERATURE

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#### NOTES AND NEWS

Notice has come of the death on December 11, 1943, of Mr. Harry Forbes Witherby, founder and editor of 'British Birds' and Honorary Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union. Mr. Bernard W. Tucker has taken over the duties of editor of the journal.

Dr. Charles Haskins Townsend, Member of the American Ornithologists' Union, died on January 28, 1944, in his eighty-fifth year.

The U. S. Department of the Interior has issued a revised list of the 'National Wildlife Refuges Administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service,' Wildlife Leaflet 179. The Service now administers 275 national refuges with an aggregate of 17,620,526 acres, of which 188 (of nearly 3,000,000 acres) are primarily for waterfowl and seventy others for other birds as well as other forms of wildlife. Permission to visit any of these refuges may be obtained by writing or calling upon the refuge managers. The areas offer fine opportunities for bird photography and study.