

## RECENT LITERATURE

**Bird Wonders of Australia.** Third Ed.—Chisholm, Alex H. (Angus and Robertson, Sydney), pp. x + 285, many plates, 1948. Price, 15s.—The avowed purpose of this book "is to present a factual, gossipy account of the 'Believe-It-or-Not' features of Australia's remarkable bird-life," and the author does this in readable fashion. Only occasionally are the facts interpreted with a tinge of anthropomorphism.

The book is a pleasant introduction to some of the birds of Australia which has sometimes been described as a "zoological backwater." Bower-birds and lyre-birds are discussed in some detail, and the activities of cuckoos are treated in a chapter "Infants that commit 'murder'." The relations existing between birds, insects, snakes and man are considered; there is a chapter on "anting."

Although the unusual has been stressed to such an extent in certain chapters (Very strange voices, Most curious nests, Strange happenings in birdland) that the overall picture of birdlife may be lost, the entire book is worthwhile reading.

The photographs are excellent and illustrate a diversity of birds, nests, and eggs, as well as human beings.—H. I. FISHER.

**Sports Afield. Collection of know your ducks and geese.**—Shortt, Angus H. and B. W. Cartwright. (Sports Afield Publ. Co., Minneapolis), 36 sheets, 36 col. pls., 40 figs., 36 col. maps, 1948. Price, \$5.00.—In January, 1946, Sports Afield Magazine began publication of a series of colored plates of North American wild fowl, painted by Angus H. Shortt, with accompanying text by B. W. Cartwright. These were continued monthly during three years, making a set showing 36 species—seven geese and brant and 29 ducks. The present book offers the complete series of plates reprinted on heavy paper with a dull surface that brings out their full attractiveness. Each plate shows at least a pair of birds in flight and occasionally other birds on water or land. The drawings are artistic and the color reproduction excellent. The size of the plates (12 by 14 inches) makes them suitable for framing.

The accounts of the various species are printed on the semi-transparent guard-sheets that accompany the plates, but are quite legible, and the sheets are heavy enough to withstand considerable usage. The accounts give scientific name, common name, a description emphasizing the field-marks of the adults, distribution with further paragraphs on spring and fall migrations, courtship and nesting, food, and average and extreme weights of both sexes. A map for each species shows the breeding range in North America (in red) and the wintering range as far as northwestern South America (in black).

The volume thus has greater value than a simple album of colored plates, and sportsmen and others will find much useful information in the discussions in which Mr. Cartwright has provided the latest data he has on the various items. The distribution maps are even more up to date than those in F. H. Kortright's 'The ducks, geese, and swans of North America' (1942), due to more recent discoveries. The blue-winged teal, however, should have been shown breeding in the New York area where it is recorded sparingly.

If the series of plates had not been published previously in the magazine, it is doubtful if the collection could have been offered to the public for a figure as moderate as five dollars.—J. T. ZIMMER.

**Birds in Britain.**—Pitt, Frances. (Macmillan and Co., London), pp. viii + 576, 16 col. pls., drawings and many photos, April 19, 1949. Price, \$7.25.—The book is designed for the beginning student of ornithology and surveys the wild, feral, and

domestic birds in Britain. It is one of a host of such books but, as the author notes, "I wanted to write a book on *Birds in Britain* and so this volume came into being."

In the first 90 pages are "discussed" the general features of birdlife, such as bird's place in nature, structure, distribution, migration and behavior; notes on songs fill one page, courtship and molts have one paragraph each, and preening is disposed of in eight lines. However, the information given is concise and accurate.

The remainder of the book treats the avifauna by families, with general notes on distinguishing characters and natural history of the species. There is little uniformity in content or extent of material on the species. Most forms are illustrated by photographs or by the colored plates of Roland Green; the illustrations are good.

Throughout the text are innumerable quotations relating to birds; these are taken from such authors as Chaucer, Plutarch, Hugo, Shakespeare, Longfellow, Milton and Masfield.—H. I. FISHER.

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#### OBITUARIES

GREGORY MACALISTER MATHEWS, a Corresponding Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union from 1911 to 1927 and an Honorary Fellow since the latter year, died at Winchester, Hampshire, England, on March 27, 1949. He was born at Bramble, New South Wales, on September 10, 1876, and was educated at King's School, Parramatta, in that state. Most of his life was spent in Australia. In seeking ornithological information he traveled around the world.

He was the Australian representative to the International Ornithological Congresses, 5th to 9th inclusive (1910-1938), and a Member of the International Ornithological Committee. He served as Vice-President of the British Ornithological Union, 1924; Assistant Editor of 'The Ibis,' 1931-41; Chairman of the British Ornithologists' Club, 1935-38; and Editor of 'The Austral Avian Record' from 1912 until 1927.

The output of his work was prodigious, the principal publications being: 'Hand list of the birds of Australia,' 1908; 'The birds of Australia,' 12 volumes, 1910-27; 'A reference list of the birds of New Zealand,' 1913; 'A list of the birds of Australia,' 1913; 'Check-List of the birds of Australia,' 1920-23; 'A manual of the birds of Australia,' 1921; 'Birds of Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands,' 1928; 'Systema avium Australasianarum,' 1927-30; 'A supplement to the birds of Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands to which is added those birds of New Zealand not figured by Buller,' 1936; 'A working list of Australian birds,' 1946; and 'Notes on the Procellariiformes,' 1943, published jointly with E. J. L. Hallstrom. His unrivalled library on Australian ornithology, donated in 1939 to the Commonwealth of Australia, is described in his 'Birds and books,' 1942.—A. W. SCHORGER.

FREDERIC COLLIN WALCOTT, a Life Associate of the A. O. U., elected in 1921, died April 27, 1949, in Stamford, Connecticut. He was born at New York Mills, near Utica, N. Y., February 19, 1869. His early education was received at Andover