

## RECENT LITERATURE

**The Birds of Concord. A Study in Population Trends.**—GRISCOM, LUDLOW. (Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge), pp. [12] + 340, 16 photos, and maps. June 30, 1949. Price, \$5.00.—This is by no means an ordinary book of the birds of a restricted area; it differs from the "usual treatment" in that trends in populations and the ecological factors behind them are stressed continually. Such a book would be impossible for most places. The Concord Region is unique in the United States in that it has been intensively used by man for about 300 years and has been studied, more or less intensively, by many ornithologists for the last century. Major ecological changes have taken place, and avian populations have varied. It is the purpose of the book to note and correlate these changes.

The mass of data that had to be reviewed for the book is astounding. The quantitative records date back to Thoreau (1832). William Brewster and the early members of the Nuttall Ornithological Club left nearly 100 volumes of records, lists, diaries and journals. More than 200 ornithologists have been active in the area for the last three or four decades. Mr. Griscom has sifted and evaluated these records at various intervals during some 13 years.

The introduction includes a description of the area, discussion of previous ornithological work and a statement of method. The remainder of the book is in two sections—population trends and species accounts.

The study of population trends is introduced by a summary of the environment provided by Concord during the century of study; this includes the geology, the climatic changes, the vegetational types, and the effect of man's activities. These ecological factors are then applied to specific avian examples. On pages 133 to 138 is a summary of the birds that have increased or decreased in numbers.

The numbers of birds are emphasized in the accounts of individual species and, where possible, year-to-year figures are given. Although this area has perhaps been studied more intensively, in quantitative fashion, and over a longer period of time than any other region of North America, the data presented show how woefully inadequate and incomparable is our numerical information. Yet, in many instances it is possible to note what seem to be long-time trends and sudden fluctuations.

Throughout the book an attempt has been made to apply general biological principles to birds. Many applications are admirably done in straightforward and simple fashion. However, in many instances the author seems to rely on broad, sweeping statements; in others, there is confusion and misuse of various terms. It would seem for example, that "biotic potential," rather than "reproductive capacity," was more important in the discussion on pages 77 to 80; the significant aspect of interest is the production of individuals and survival of these individuals to reproduce, not the sheer numbers produced in one year. Differential mortality and length of reproductive life must also be considered. The statement on page 91 that "Most North American birds if subjected even locally to the loss of 90 per cent of the *adult* population in one year would become extirpated for generations at the least, . . ." is questionable. It may apply to some birds, but it does not seem to apply to the Ruffed Grouse, as Edminster (1947: 317) quotes local losses of 75 to 90 per cent, and we simply do not know the situation with respect to many species. Sharp-tailed Grouse seem to fluctuate even more violently than do Ruffed Grouse.

What evidence is there that "seasoned adults" (p. 81) are absolutely necessary to the survival of a species? Cannot yearling birds, capable of reproducing, stave off extinction? I assume that "seasoned adults" are birds that have already passed

through one breeding period. In the discussion of annual mortality (p. 80) is the correct statement that for a population to remain static all that is necessary is that a pair of birds survive in good breeding condition and that they be on satisfactory breeding grounds.

Despite the fact that various workers frequently state that a species is not utilizing all available habitat or range, are we justified in saying (pp. 130-131) that that species has an "inadequate population," terming it an "unsuccessful" and even hazarding the opinion that "Here, as elsewhere, there might well be four times as many [Golden-winged Warblers]?"

Although I take exception to various other such generalizations, the book represents one of the first attempts to deal quantitatively with localized populations of birds over long periods of time. It is well written and is worthwhile, pleasant, and thought-provoking reading. The 16 excellent photographs from the library of the National Audubon Society are an added value, as is the complete indexing.—H. I. FISHER.

**A Conservation Handbook.**—Ordway, Samuel H. (Conservation Foundation, New York), pp. 1-76, 1949.—One hundred one concepts and terms commonly used in conservation practice are defined and described in simple elementary language. In addition there is a combination glossary and index. This little book may be useful to the uninitiated for understanding the jargon of conservation literature but is of little interest to the professional.—S. C. KENDEIGH.

**The Inside Story of Binoculars. Choosing a Binocular.**—Robert J. and Elsa Reichert. (Mirakel Repair Co., Mount Vernon, New York), pp. 1-12, 18 figs., 2 tables. Price, \$0.25.—This pamphlet consists of three articles full of factual, critical data on binoculars. Tests for efficiency, methods of selection, an evaluation of most makes (both foreign and domestic), and suggestions for maintenance are discussed.

Other articles by the same authors are:

1. Tests to Determine Quality of Binoculars. *Bird-Lore*, April, 1932.
2. Repairing of Binoculars. *Optical Journ.*, April 15, 1932.
3. The Use and Care of Binoculars. *Journ. Forestry*, July, 1935.
4. Choosing and Using Your Binoculars. *Nat. Mag.*, April, 1937.

It is believed that information in the above papers will be of importance to ornithologists in selecting and/or maintaining binoculars for highest efficiency.—H. I. FISHER.

**Indian Hill Birds.**—Ali, Salim. (Oxford Univ. Press, London, England.), pp. iii + 188, 72 plates, 64 in color. 1949. Price, Rupees 20.—This is an ambitious attempt to combine into a pocket-sized volume a brief enumeration of some 287 species of Indian birds which occur in the hills of that subcontinent. The magnitude of the task may perhaps be realized when the table on page xv is read, which lists 13 different hill regions, as far away from each other as the hills of Baluchistan and those of Ceylon, a distance of 2000 miles. Not only are these different hill regions remote, but a great variety of habitats occurs within them, ranging from north temperate or alpine to tropical rain forest. The task then is a difficult one, of far greater magnitude than that achieved by the author in his extremely popular 'The Book of Indian Birds.'

That Mr. Ali succeeds is due in large part to his many years of tramping about the Indian Hills, from his early days of residence near Dehra Dun, to his many trips for the Bombay Natural History Society Survey to Mysore, Travancore and the Central

Indian Hills, and to numerous side trips to Kashmir, Ladakh and Kailas. There are in truth few corners of the Indian Hills into which Salim Ali has not delved, and his name has become a byword among amateurs of birds in India.

The book is arranged with two comprehensive tables in the first part giving the distribution of the species, and then their characteristic recognition marks, tails, bills, crests, colors or whether largely white or pied, or the general effect brown or "sober." Following this is a detailed description of the species and their habits. For the complete amateur, I am not sure that the color guides are of any great significance. A bird seen in the jungle or other dark cover is virtually always "sober" in appearance, even though in reality it may be brightly colored. This is a difficult question for popular bird books which may perhaps never be solved to everyone's satisfaction.

Again, it is hard to include every species which might possibly be seen by the visitor or resident in the Indian Hills. One species which might well have been put in is the Purple Thrush, *Cochoa purpurea*, often seen about gardens in the Darjeeling area. But space is a limiting factor in a book of this sort. From the point of view of a specialist, I am a little sorry that the author has not brought his scientific names more up to date. Numerous authoritative revisions of Asian birds have appeared in the last 15 years which might have been taken advantage of. Even if the author had been afraid of confusing the learned amateur trained in the school of Stuart Baker and his "Fauna" and so had hesitated to change scientific names listed in that outmoded work, it would have been possible to refer to a bird as "the such and such" of Stuart Baker. However, this is certainly not a matter of concern for the average reader.

Mr. G. M. Henry, who is at the very top of bird illustrators, has prepared 64 beautiful plates for this book, numbers of them of species not at all accessible in other illustrations. The originals which I have seen, of course, far surpass the printed plates which tend to err heavily on the side of reds and blues. By a clever stratagem he has succeeded in keeping the Red-billed Blue Magpie a decent size in his plate, rather than sacrificing the bird for the sake of its long tail. The photographs, principally by the author and Wan Tho Loke, are of first quality. This is an extremely useful and well-planned volume which should be possessed by all lovers of Indian birds.—S. DILLON RIPLEY.

**Records of Parrot-like Birds Bred in the United States of America.**—Prestwich, Arthur A. (A. A. Prestwich, Chelmsford Rd., Southgate, London), pp. 1–57, September, 1949. Price, \$2.00.—This booklet is a compilation of records from "Aviculture" and from Crandall's papers in 'Bulletin of the New York Zoological Society'; no other sources were searched. The various forms are discussed separately and one may find data on the number of eggs laid, longevity, fertility, hybridization and feeding.—H. I. FISHER.

**Bird Life.**—Armstrong, Edward A. (Lindsay Drummond Ltd., London), pp. ix + 152, col. frontis., 23 pls., 45 text-figs., October 28, 1949. Price, 12/6 net.—This book which emphasizes adaptations and relationships of birds to their environment might be termed a more advanced supplement to one of Armstrong's previous books—"The Way Birds Live"—which was designed for beginners.

In a very readable way the author discusses the rôle of heat, light, migration, territory, peck order, family care, recognition, coloration, voice, choice of nest sites and protective devices in the life of birds.

The photographs are excellent, but there is no index. Although one may take exception to such statements as that on page 15 regarding Cliff Swallows—"To such

efficient fliers an extra 2,000 miles is of little importance."—and the implication on page 127 that Woodcock intentionally carry their chicks between their legs, the material is concise and enjoyable in presentation and up to date in content. This is a good companion book to any field guide; beginners and others should be encouraged to learn some of the general principles of behavior, structure, ecology and distribution. There has been in our encouragement of beginners, too much emphasis on simple recognition and the getting of additional species on one's "life list."—H. I. FISHER.

**The Awl-Birds.**—Stanford, J. K. (Bevin-Adair Co., New York), 90 pp., 28 text-figs., December 7, 1949. Price \$2.00.—The return of the Avocet to England as a breeding bird after an absence of 123 years, inspired this adventure story based upon fact. The name "Awl-Bird" comes from the English countrymen because of the fancied resemblance of the bird's bill to a cobbler's awl.

The story deals with the nesting of three pairs of Avocets in the coastal marshes of an abandoned manor which has been purchased by a former army officer who knew the area as a child. His discovery of the birds and his jealous guardianship against egg collectors is an exciting ornithological story. In some respects it is reminiscent of the British film "The Tawny Pipit".

A happy collaboration is provided by the author's friend and illustrator, A. M. Hughes who served in the British Navy. An introduction by Helen G. Cruickshank points out the moral of the story as of equal application to many species of American birds.—FREDERICK C. LINCOLN.

**Wildfowling in the Mississippi Valley.**—Connett, Eugene V. (Editor). (D. Van Nostrand Co., New York), pp. xvi + 387, more than 200 photos, October 14, 1949. Price, \$12.00.—This is one of the Van Nostrand "Sporting Books"; it is designed to contain "the glowing story of the past," as regards the great number and slaughter of ducks and geese formerly in this region.

The initial chapter by F. C. Lincoln treats of the Mississippi Flyway as a biological entity. Cartwright's chapter on the breeding grounds contains brief descriptions of the area and presents recent numerical data on nesting density, band returns, and brood counts. The remainder of the book, except for the last three brief chapters (Research on Waterfowl, Duck Calling, and Making Hollow Wood Duck Decoys), is devoted to historical accounts, by province or state, written by various individuals acquainted with the locality concerned.

A typical chapter includes various and innumerable stories of "1000 duck kills" in one morning, of the activities of market hunters, of the origin of gun clubs, and of the sundry tricks employed by hunters to secure the most ducks. Information on conservation and the general pattern of distribution is to be found in some chapters.

As an historical story, each chapter is of significance. Individually, each chapter makes interesting and informative reading. However, there is great redundancy of material between the chapters. This, of course, does emphasize that ignorance of the principles of conservation was not limited to one region and that the problem is an international affair. It also serves to point up the need for intelligent management, including utilization, of our natural resources.—H. I. FISHER.

**Bibliographie Ornithologique Francaise.** 2 vols.—Ronsil, Rene. *In* Encyclopedie Ornithologique, (Paris), vols. 8 and 9. Vol. 1: 10 + 534; Vol. 2: 1-89. Volume 1 carries the date, 1948, and volume 2 has 1949 on title page; last page in each volume gives date of issue as April 29, 1949.—Volume 1 contains the actual bibliography of some 3,496 authors, listed in alphabetical order. There are citations of 11,607 articles in French and Latin and published between 1473 and 1944. All these titles are of publications dealing with birds in France and in the French Colonies.

Volume 2 is an index to volume 1. The first section lists the rather unusual abbreviations of journals, used in the first volume. In the second section, the index is by subjects such as food, anatomy, migration etc.; section three is a geographical index; four is an index to monographs; five indexes the taxonomic and historical papers; and six deals with applied ornithology.—H. I. FISHER.

**Birds' Nests. A Field Guide.**—Headstrom, Richard. (Ives Washburn, New York), pp. 1-128, 61 photos, September 14, 1949. Price, \$2.75.—The keys which form the body of this book have been used and built up over a period of several years; they were first published in part in 'The Bulletin of the Massachusetts Audubon Society.' The major headings of the key are based on the general ecological situation of the nest (that is, swamp, woods or field) and minor divisions are: broad aspect of location (ground, grass, tree etc.); immediate site (where in tree, bush); type of nest (open, closed); shape (cup, saucer, gourd, platform); attachment (suspension, saddle); size; depth; and materials used. When a nest is run through the keys to the species one finds an adequate description and a broad statement of the range of the species; these may be used to check the identification.

The photographs are an additional aid. Only species (more than 300) nesting in the United States and east of the 100th meridian are included.—H. I. FISHER.

**Birds of Britain. A Guide to the Common Species.**—Macdonald, J. D. (G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., London), pp. 1-153, many figs., 9 pls. (5 col. pls.). July 1, 1949. Price, 8s. 6d.—The organization of this book is based upon the sound thesis that, for beginners at least, recognition of birds by natural groups is of primary importance. However, these groups should be uniformly formulated on morphological, taxonomic or ecological bases. Arbitrary groupings give rise to unnatural combinations—the Sylviidae, Prunellidae and Troglodytidae as the "Warbler Group"; the dipper and kingfisher together. There may be good reasons for including the cuckoo and shrike in the "Hawks and Hawk-like Birds," but one wonders if such conglomerations will not be confusing as the novice learns more of the true relationships.

After 38 pages of characterization of these 20 groups, there are species accounts, arranged by the same groups, of some 200 of the common and common-to-rare birds of Britain which has an all-inclusive list of more than 400 species. Keys of field characters are provided for differentiating the species in each group. The species accounts are not uniform in content but contain information on size, field characters, habitat, seasonal status, a brief summary of distribution in Britain and some behavior traits; songs and notes are not accorded much attention. Juvenal plumages are not described, and in some instances of external sexual dimorphism the male and female are inadequately described.

The colored plates and wash plates are interesting and informative; the black and white sketches are not outstanding. The index consists solely of common names, although scientific names are present in the accounts, and there are no indices to the pertinent material in the descriptions by groups. The group discussions are cross-referenced to the species accounts, but the reverse referencing is absent.

Despite these possible short-comings which are perhaps of minor magnitude, the guide is well constructed. It should prove of value to those not acquainted with the birds of Britain.—H. I. FISHER.

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#### OBITUARIES

GAYLE BENJAMIN PICKWELL, Member of the American Ornithologists' Union since 1938, died on May 29, 1949.

Born on March 25, 1899, in Murdock (Cass County), Nebraska, Pickwell received his early schooling in the public schools of Murdock and Elmwood, Nebraska. His A.B. and M.A. degrees were obtained from the University of Nebraska in 1921 and 1922. Work toward the Ph.D. degree, carried on at Northwestern University and in special summer study at Woods Hole, Massachusetts, was brought to completion at Cornell University in 1927. His thesis for the doctorate was a field study of the Prairie Horned Lark, published by the St. Louis Academy of Science in 1931.

From 1922 to 1926, Pickwell was an instructor in zoology at Northwestern University. In the fall of 1927 he joined the staff of the San Jose State College and rose to full professorship in 1930, a position which he held until his retirement in 1946.

In the winter of 1930 he became the victim of multiple sclerosis, the disease which