

REVIEWS

Days with Birds. Studies of Habits of Some East African Species.—V. G. L. van Someren. *Fieldiana, Zoology*, vol. 38, 520 pp., 126 photos. 1956.—For many years Dr. van Someren was the leading student of birds resident in Kenya Colony and made very extensive collections, now largely divided between the American Museum of Natural History (whence they came as part of the Rothschild Collection) and the Chicago Natural History Museum. He also made a great many intensive studies of the habits of a large number of species and took thousands of photographs from “hides” or “blinds” set up near their nests. In the present book he limits himself to accounts of 160 species studied in his 40-acre sanctuary at Ngong, near Nairobi. Originally part of a longer manuscript with many more illustrations, the book was written for more general reading in the hope of stimulating interest in the bird life of eastern Africa, especially among the younger settlers in that area. It was not possible to get the larger work published, and it is fortunate that the Chicago Natural History Museum has brought out these detailed first-hand observations that otherwise might never have become available as part of our records of African birds. In many species the data given here are the most extensive of any one source and add significantly to what was in print.

On reading some of the accounts of birds generally considered as poorly known, it comes as something of a surprise to find the author spent many hours daily, often for weeks on end, watching and recording their activities at close range. The accounts at times achieve the degree of intimacy one has come to expect of North American and European life history studies. The excellent photographs of many of the birds are the best, if not the only, ones taken of their respective subjects. Some of them have appeared in the recent two-volume work on East African birds by Mackworth-Praed and Grant.

It may be mentioned that the author had no opportunity to decide on deletions from the original text or illustrations and may well feel disappointment at what may seem to him a partial publication. However, all others interested in African birds will be grateful that so much could be printed in these days of high costs. The thankless job of reducing the manuscript to the final bulk fell to Dr. Austin L. Rand, to whom also fell the task of seeing it through the press. This is an important contribution to African ornithology and will be a continually useful reference work.—HERBERT FRIEDMANN.

The Waterfowl of the World.—Jean Delacour, with twenty-four plates in color by Peter Scott, and twenty-nine distribution maps. Volume Two. *The Dabbling Ducks*. London, 232 pp. Country Life Ltd. 1956.—The second volume of this comprehensive work by Mr. Delacour, with Peter Scott's splendid illustrations, is now out, living up to the first in scope and presentation. This volume encompasses the group that the author calls the dabbling ducks, the mallards, teal, and their kinfolk, and follows the method of classification of the family Anatidae proposed by Delacour and Mayr in 1945 in the ‘Wilson Bulletin.’

It is interesting in this connection to compare the systematic treatment of this group with the last great monograph of the ducks, that of Dr. John C. Phillips, published in a more expansive way between 1922 and 1926. Phillips' arrangement of these species consisted of sixty-six species in ten genera, while Delacour's comprises forty-three species in six genera, a reduction of thirty-five per cent and forty per cent, respectively. The difference in the number of species is essentially the result of treating island forms as subspecies instead of distinct species. The reduc-

tion in the number of genera is largely due to a better knowledge of a few rare and previously little-known forms such as Salvadori's Duck or the Auckland Island Duck, which has shown that their being pigeonholed as monotypic genera was hardly worthwhile. In addition, the shovellers, kept as *Spatula* by Phillips, are here lumped in *Anas* by Delacour, simply a mark of consistency in this case. If genera are to be lumped, then the expanded genus should be used sensibly, as a measure emphasizing relationship. Like all such present-day revisions, Delacour's current one creates large, expanded genera, with a few virtually monotypic genera left here and there to take care of the inevitable "aberrant," "primitive," or otherwise curious exceptions, the arrested oddities.

For the moment this volume epitomizes the last word on the dabbling ducks. But, "last year's words belong to last year's language." A new subspecies of Blue-winged Teal has been described this year, too late for discussion in this book. In addition there are bound to be certain points on which doubt still exists and which must await further research and confirmation. Such a point is the status of Oustalet's Gray Duck, considered a full species, *Anas oustaleti*, by Phillips, and relegated to a paragraph, p. 42, by Delacour as a mere hybrid. This bird breeds on Saipan in the Marianas group, and perhaps on islets to the north and south of Saipan. Yamashina, in an interesting article in 'Pacific Science' in 1947, pointed out that a number of his large series of these birds showed evidences of male Mallard (*A. platyrhynchos*) plumage, rather like northern Mallards coming into or going out of eclipse plumage. He suggested that in fact the population was an unstable one, a sort of hybrid swarm, based on descendents of casual Mallards arriving from the north and stray Gray Ducks (*A. superciliosa*) arriving from the islands to the south. If this is so, it is a very interesting case biologically speaking and one which should be thoroughly investigated, for such a "laboratory" case in birds in the wild state is of necessity rare. It is a case which should be signalled, emphasized, rather than minimized as is done in Delacour's text.

In fact, of course, the evidence is not complete as this volume itself shows, for specimens of other island subspecies such as the Kerguelen Pintail and the Hawaiian Duck occasionally show traces of male nuptial plumage of the ancestral form even after long isolation. Finally, if, however, the Marianas Mallard is indeed merely a hybrid as Delacour believes, then it provides a third case of overlap in the breeding ranges of two species of the Mallard group. On p. 56, Mr. Delacour states that there are only two known cases of overlap in the breeding ranges of this group, that of the Mallard with the Black Duck in eastern North America, and with the Spot-billed Duck in northeast Asia.

Each species account in the volume is arranged with a general summary first, then a discussion of each subspecies. Here and there one could wish that a more detailed description of distribution or of characteristics had been given. For example, on pp. 57-59, an interesting new record by Ludlow of the wintering range of the eastern form of the Spotbill in the Tsangpo Valley of Tibet is omitted, a record which would explain the otherwise rather mysterious vagrant status of this form in northeast India. The distribution maps are similarly sketchy in some cases. Especially when the map is of a small geographical area for a limited range, it would seem wise not only to make it very exact, but also perhaps to demarcate the area with explanatory text or geographical place names actually on the map itself. Only the expert presumably could feel at home with the distribution map of *Anas leucophrys* for example on p. 195, or that of *Rhodonessa caryophyllacea* on p. 198. And even here a moderately knowledgeable person might quibble, for the distribution of the

Pink-headed Duck is carelessly drawn, including such areas as the mountains of Nepal and southeast Tibet, where the species presumably never occurred, and omitting Manipur and northern Andhra where it has been known to occur. On p. 107, it seems that Falcated Duck are by no means generally a wintering species in Assam.

In the sections on characteristics there are certain omissions, the most notable one perhaps being the failure on p. 112 to list the principal character of Coues' Gadwall, the increased number of lamellae of the bill. Again certain diagnoses are vague, at least to this reader. I am not clear about the difference between female Widgeon plumage and female Mallard dress being due to the absence of lengthwise markings in the former. Perhaps all authors who know their subject as well as Delacour tend at times to oversimplify, at other times to be didactic. There is a great deal of variation in all sorts of characteristics of ducks, as for example, Terry Jones is quoted as saying about the eggs of shovellers on p. 66. One hen Shoveller lays "sausage-shaped" eggs, another quite rounded. The classical attempts of oologists to arrange species by their egg shapes and colors would be confounded by the plasticity of shape, size, and color of waterfowl eggs. My first set of Philippine Duck eggs, laid in 1950, were rather rounded. I was struck again this past summer of 1956 by the very rounded shape of another clutch of Philippine Duck eggs.

My single Philippine duckling, described in the 'Wilson Bulletin' in 1951, was very dark, much darker than those reared by Scott and Jones later, rather reminiscent of the Falcated duckling shown opposite p. 110, but with reduced spotting. There is a very great variation in the tone of plumage of ducklings, as consultation with Peter Scott's plates of ducklings will confirm. My Chiloë Widgeon never seem to be as palely spotted on the back, as that in the plate facing page 162. Nor are my other baby widgeon as olive-tinted as those on the same plate, nor my Pintail as curiously marked with deep buff and gray on the face. Even a common species like the Gadwall, a well-known duckling plumage, is capable of considerable variety in facial pattern, spotting, and tone of color. A single Gadwall duckling this spring at Litchfield, lacked the facial pattern, the stripe in front of the eye, and the pale edging along the bill, and gave every evidence of being a different species, until it finally lost its downy plumage.

Under general habits there are many interesting resumé of behavior patterns, particularly those quoted from the penetrating studies of Lorenz. To many current students, these discussions will be one of the most valuable parts of these volumes. Even here there is room for variation. On p. 72, the Chestnut-breasted Teal is said never to perform the "grunt" in the "grunt-whistle" display. One of my drake Chestnut-breasted Teal on the other hand always gave an excellent and penetrating grunt at the culmination of the rearing-up display with bent head and neck which produces the whistle.

The colored plates are up to Peter Scott's usual high standard of excellence. The arrangement is such that many of the rare and little-known subspecies of wide-ranging species are also represented in color. Here and there occasional patterns seem slightly overdone. The plate opposite page 46 shows a drake Hawaiian Duck in what must be a somewhat rare plumage, brightly colored with deep rufous breast and greenish head, and curled sex feathers. I have only seen one skin as well-marked as this. Surely the more normal plumage pattern of the male Koloa is hen-feathered, more like the female? In this connection it is worth noting that individual Hawaiian Ducks may have traces of white feathers about the head in the same manner, al-

though more reduced, as the Laysan Duck. Another representation which seems unusual is that of the cock European Widgeon opposite page 118. Here the streak of dark greenish behind the eye seems rather exaggerated, almost like a hybrid between the European and American species. The female European Widgeon in the "reddish" phase seems a bit too red, but this is probably due to the color reproduction process, as is perhaps the somewhat overly dull, "dull" phase of the female Chiloë Widgeon.

One aspect of the book which deserves recognition is the summary of the records of breeding successes in captivity. Rearing wild species in captivity or semi-captivity, the practice of aviculture as it is called, is all too little-known in this country, either among professional ornithologists or among bird lovers or conservationists. Students of behavior, confined to laboratories, tend to begrudge acceptance of results made under semi-wild, not controlled conditions. Bird lovers or conservationists often exhibit a strong emotional response of horror and dislike at the thought of birds even in a semi-confined state.

The aviculturist, the man with the "green thumb," who on occasion can rear and maintain delicate species under captive conditions deserves more credit for shedding light on the family of the waterfowl. It does seem too as if in certain cases of vanishing species, aviculture has become the sole answer to their continuance. The Hawaiian Goose, like the American Buffalo, has proved itself successful in captivity. Far better for our grandchildren to see the relict "Nene" alive, even under confinement, than merely stuffed like the Labrador Duck. Mr. Delacour in this volume makes a plea for the Hawaiian Duck and the Laysan Teal, exhorting us to do something about breeding the species in captivity before it is too late.

This beautiful volume with its mass of lovely plates is a testimonial to the patient work of the author and the illustrator. It is indeed a valuable and rewarding volume and an example for future study.—S. DILLON RIPLEY.

Louis Agassiz Fuertes.—Mary Fuertes Boynton. Oxford University Press, New York. pp. xviii + 317, with 17 half-tone illustrations. January 26, 1956. Price \$7.50.—Although no account of so remarkable a life as that of Louis Agassiz Fuertes could fail to make fascinating reading, this can in no way disparage a masterful piece of editing and of sympathetic commentary by the author, Mary Fuertes Boynton. Incorporating abundant carefully selected excerpts from his correspondence into a concise biographical framework, she has given us a delightfully intimate account of her father's life and character. Beginning with his birth (in 1874) and childhood in Ithaca, New York, we are given glimpses of his parents, the developing interest in birds and in bird painting, his education at Cornell, the launching of his career, his marriage and family life, social activities, and numerous lasting friendships. We follow his travels in many parts of the world and his rise as the country's leading ornithological artist, to his untimely death at a railroad crossing in 1927. Letters and accounts from diverse sources—from family, students, friends, and admirers of all ages and stations—have glowing praise for his genius and personal charm. Many will agree that he was the greatest bird artist of all time. None who read of his life can deny that he was uniquely endowed, with great ability in his special field, and in everything else to which he turned his hand; with boundless vigor and energy to make the most productive use of his singular opportunities; and with a sincerity, humility, love for his fellow man, and eagerness for living, which endeared him to everyone with whom he came in contact.

Louis Fuertes' seems to have been a near-perfect life, "unmarred," with "no youthful error, no grave mistake, no tragic flaw, and though his work might have

gone on to still higher achievement he was spared even the suggestion of a decline." Both Elliott Coues and Abbott H. Thayer, respectively his influential first advisor and his self-appointed teacher, early recognized in him a peculiar gift, such that both considered it inevitable that he should find fame and fortune in the almost unprecedented profession he had chosen for himself. His whole life was directed toward the one goal: to study and collect birds, sketch them in the field, and know them, and so to be better able to portray them in his paintings. In all this he was eminently successful, and the quantity of work he produced is staggering. Yet with all this singleness of purpose, Louis had an interest in everything and time for everyone. From his undergraduate days on, he was in demand as an informal entertainer, story-teller, and lecturer, and captivated audiences of all kinds. To young and old, in Ithaca, he became "Uncle Louis," and folks flocked to his studio, to bring him specimens, ask questions or favors, or just talk with him. He wrote but little of a formal nature, yet in all his writing is a fresh originality, and an all-pervading good humor, that make a lasting impression upon the reader. His personal letters have gems of spelling, phraseology, and metaphor that are peculiarly and delightfully his own.

Among the strongest influences of the artist's youth was his close relationship with Abbott Thayer, and he lived much in the remarkable Thayer household. There is correspondence dealing with Mr. Thayer's offer to tutor Louis in basic principles of painting, with the paintings themselves, and later with the controversy about concealing coloration in animals, aroused by the classic work of Abbott and Gerald Thayer. Fuertes was a staunch supporter of their major concepts and did much to popularize them. By way of passing on his heritage from Thayer, he in turn gave generously of his knowledge and experience to younger artists such as Courtenay Brandreth, Conrad Roland, and George M. Sutton. In correspondence with the latter, as in some of that with Abbott Thayer, are found passages aimed at the very heart of those precepts which can give to a bird portrait its ultimate perfection: knowledge not only of the bird itself, but of light and shadow and their effects upon color, and of the reflections from sky or foliage, upon which is based the skill of the bird artist.

Fuertes' expeditions took him to Alaska, to various parts of the United States, the Bahamas, the Magdalen Islands, and Mexico, to Colombia twice, and finally to Abyssinia. And from each trip we have here in his letters most colorful accounts of the sights and sounds of the region as he found it, of his associates, and of his personal experiences. The reader wishes for more of the accompanying sketches that must have made the original letters even more truly works of art. In his profession and on his travels, Fuertes was intimately associated—in addition to those already mentioned—with Frank M. Chapman, Wilfred Osgood, Vernon Bailey, Allan Brooks, and countless other naturalists and people of note, who figure prominently in the letters and narrative.

Some might wish that more of the concrete material on technique could have been included, or that even more space could have been devoted to the detailed accounts of expeditions. For these, one might sacrifice a little of the personal and of the trivial that has been preserved. Yet all is important to portraying the man as he was, so intensely alive and human; and here lies the real charm of his story. The format of the book is simple and artistic, and the printing good. A number of minor typographical errors, while regrettable, are but a slight distraction. While the half-tone illustrations are excellent, it seems a pity that at least one hitherto unpublished original could not have been reproduced in color. A bibliography,

and an apparently complete listing of important works illustrated by Fuertes, are valuable adjuncts to the text.

Any bird lover or art enthusiast, in fact anyone interested in travel or in familiarizing himself with a truly great personality, will find this book a most satisfying reading experience, as he follows the brilliant fulfillment of Louis Fuertes' life ambitions.—WILLIAM A. LUNK.

Western Bird Songs of Dooryard, Field and Forest.—Recorded by Jerry and Norma Stillwell (Jerry E. Stillwell, R.F.D. 2, Fayetteville, Arkansas).—This is the third long-playing (33 $\frac{1}{8}$ rpm.) phonograph disk produced by the Stillwells from recordings made in the field. The first two (Auk, 70: 223, 1953, and Auk, 72: 101, 1955) recorded songs of eastern and southern species. The present disk covers 68 species and subspecies from widely scattered localities from the Rockies to the Pacific.

As in record no. 2, recordings were often made of the songs of several individuals of species with varying song patterns. Subspecific variation is demonstrated in the White-crowned Sparrow by the songs of the four races; furthermore local variations in the Nuttall's and Puget Sound races are exhibited by sample utterances from different localities within the breeding ranges of these subspecies. Place names are also printed on the cover for many of the other species recorded.

An unusual item is a sequence of calls of the Mearn's Quail, a species whose voice cannot often, if ever, have been caught by the microphone before.

Although there are occasional lapses, the quality of the sound reproduction is for the most part extremely good. The record can be highly recommended as a far more satisfactory means of song identification than printed syllabification or graph illustration. It furnishes therefore an excellent companion to the best field guides. It is hoped that more species will be recorded in the near future.—LAIDLAW WILLIAMS.

The Technique of Bird Photography.—John Warham. (The Focal Press, London and New York), 199 pp. Price, \$4.95.—All too often articles and books with titles suggesting instruction in the methods of bird photography devote much more time to anecdotes and ornithological facts than to the ways of obtaining pictures. In this book, however, John Warham, one of Great Britain's most efficient bird photographers, presents in a clear full manner most of the basic techniques. It is essentially a how-to-do-it-book. Advice for the selection and care of cameras, lenses, tripods, and other equipment is thoroughly discussed. Instructions for photographing at nests and feeding stations, with or without flash, for construction and placing of blinds, and for tackling a variety of photographic problems are clearly documented.

Since there are two outstanding field guides to the birds of the British Isles, the last section of this book entitled "A Guide to British Birds" seems superfluous. This is a minor criticism, however, in view of the concrete information offered those interested in trying their patience and skill photographing birds.—ALLAN D. CRUICKSHANK.