

REVIEWS

Living Birds of the World.—E. Thomas Gilliard. 1958. Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, N.Y. 400 pp., 400 photographs, 217 in color. Price: \$12.50.—Ornithological literature is replete with synopses of the birds of numerous countries and even large sections of whole continents. There has been, however, until now no modern and fairly comprehensive treatment of the various families of the birds of the world to which the student could readily turn. The present work fills this need as effectively as any single, nontechnical volume could hope to do. In addition it is one of the most attractive bird books that has come to this reviewer's attention in a long time. There are 217 magnificently reproduced color photographs and a comparable number in black and white, that convey admirably the form and character of one or more representatives of nearly all bird families. In addition, the author has supplied authoritative information on the structure, relationships, courtship and behavior, number of species, and world range of each family. Indeed few ornithologists are more eminently equipped by way of personal experience to write about living birds from nearly all corners of the world than is the author, who has traveled widely and done much exploring in faraway places. He has a style that makes for delightful reading, and although he has held technical terminology to a minimum, he has nevertheless incorporated a wealth of technical information about the biology of birds. Much of this information, especially that dealing with birds outside North America, would not be available to bird students lacking access to an extensive ornithological library. It may be a hackneyed statement to say "here is a book that every ornithologist should have in his library," but *Living Birds of the World* richly deserves this commendation. I have it on my work desk where both I and my students refer to it repeatedly for specific information or else simply peruse its pages and superb illustrations for moments of enjoyment.—G. H. LOWERY, JR.

The Birds of the Palearctic Fauna. A Systematic Reference. Order Passeriformes.—Charles Vaurie. 1959. 762 pp, 2 maps. Price: £ 5 5s. H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd., 3 Warwick Court, London.—Ornithologists all over the world will welcome the publication of a new reference book that deals with the birds of the Palearctic—a book foreshadowed for several years by a long series of careful articles published as "Systematic Notes on Palearctic Birds" (*Amer. Mus. Novit.*, 1953–1958). Hartert's famous manual "Die Vögel der paläarktischen Fauna" is not only out of print, but also out of date. Since 1938, when the "Ergänzungsband" to Hartert's work was concluded, many new facts concerning distribution and ecology have come to light, and a considerable number of subspecies have been described.

Vaurie did not intend to supplant Hartert's book. By omitting plumage descriptions of species and biological details, and by restricting himself mainly to references on systematics, distribution and ecology, Vaurie has produced a book of the greatest importance to advanced students of taxonomy and zoogeography. Though in principle adopting the check-list method, quoting all names proposed after Hartert and outlining the range of each species and subspecies, this book goes far beyond the usual scheme, as far as distributional, ecological and taxonomic information is concerned. Vaurie indicates the ecological niche of each species and the nature of its geographical variation, pointing out clines of color and size. He states the distinguishing characters of each subspecies and their relationships, and often calls attention to unsolved taxonomic problems at the species-subspecies level.

This is made possible by his unrivalled familiarity with the principal literature (including that published in Russia), and by his extensive studies of almost all important collections on both sides of the Atlantic.

By grading the accepted subspecies into three categories of differentiation, marked by symbols, the author has introduced a novel and commendable method. The lowest category of subspecies—the slightly differentiated local population and the intermediate stage in a cline—are placed in synonymy, marked with an asterisk. This procedure saves space and conforms with the present “tendency to de-emphasize subspecies, which has followed the realization that almost every population or segment thereof can be shown by careful analysis, statistical or otherwise, to possess some ‘subspecific’ characters” (Amadon, *Auk*, **67**: 497, 1950). Future revisers will probably place in the lowest category even more subspecies than has Vaurie.

Though nearly always agreeing with the taxonomic views of the author, the reviewer is not inclined to follow him in a few cases when he seems to have oversimplified the situation. In the reviewer's opinion this has occurred in the following instances: Vaurie considers the wagtail *Motacilla lutea* to be a subspecies of *M. flava*, in spite of the fact that this distinctive form breeds within the range of *M. flava beema*, and for that reason was treated as a separate species by Sushkin (1925). In addition Sushkin considered *M. taiwana* (here also treated as a subspecies of *M. flava*) to be a species, with which the reviewer agrees. Vaurie follows the lead of Meinertzhagen (1924) in including the pipit *Anthus richardi* and its pale-arctic allies in the Rassenkreis *Anthus novaeseelandiae*. It seems more consistent with the known facts to arrange this group into two species: a) *A. richardi*, including all palearctic forms, and b) *A. novaeseelandiae*, ranging from tropical India and Burma to New Zealand, and including *A. rufulus*. The complex of forms assembled by Vaurie in his bush warbler species *Cettia diphone* seems to consist of two species: a) *Horeites cantans* (with the subspecies *cantans* and *borealis*), and b) *Horeites diphone* (with the forms inhabiting the islands from Sakhalin to the southern Ryu Kyus). Vaurie (following Delacour) merges *Horeites* in *Cettia* and treats *fortipes* and *pallidus* as conspecific with the Javanese species *montanus*. It seems to me preferable to maintain the genus *Horeites* and to treat as full species *Horeites montanus*, *H. pallidus*, and *H. fortipes* (with the subspecies *fortipes* and *davidianus*). Further cases of apparent oversimplification may be Vaurie's treatment of the genus *Spelaornis* (which follows Ripley, 1950) and of the *Phylloscopus fuscatus* assemblage (which differs from Ticehurst, 1938). The arrangement of certain rose finches might have been improved: *Carpodacus waltoni*, treated as a subspecies of *C. pulcherrimus*, seems closest to and conspecific with *C. eos*.

Americans will find of interest that all the North American rosy finches (*Leucosticte*) are treated as subspecies of the wide-ranging Asiatic *L. arctoa*. The impression should not be left that Vaurie is an extreme “lumper”. A number of forms that have often been treated as subspecies are, on the basis of new evidence, given species rank; for example, the Willow Tit, *Parus montanus*, and the Corsican and Chinese Nuthatches, *Sitta whiteheadi* and *S. villosa*, are treated as specifically distinct from the North American *P. atricapillus* and *S. canadensis*, and the Serin, *Serinus serinus*, as distinct from the Canary, *S. canaria*.

Many ornithologists accustomed to Hartert's nomenclature will probably deplore Vaurie's use of a broad generic concept, with the consequent disappearance of many familiar names. Vaurie's changes were made for the sake of simplification—a

simplification that sometimes obscures significant differences. The reviewer believes no gain results from such generic mergers as *Chelidorhynx* in *Rhipidura*, *Urosphena* and *Horeites* in *Cettia*, *Spiloptila* in *Prinia*, *Moupinia* in *Chrysomma*, *Pachyglossa* in *Dicaeum*, *Hedydipna* in *Anthreptes*, *Cinnyris* in *Nectarinia*, *Chloris* in *Carduelis*, *Bucanetes* and *Erythrospiza* in *Rhodopechys*, *Procarduelis* and *Pyrrhospiza* in *Carpodacus*, and so on. This trend towards revolutionary generic consolidations, started in America by two enterprising authors, and carried to extremes by some of their followers, results in many new, and at first sight unintelligible, nomenclatural combinations. Proposals for drastic change do no harm when advanced in special articles, but they become a dangerous cause of instability if hastily adopted in widespread books of reference, where they may be copied uncritically by ornithologists. Many novel proposals, superficially persuasive on first reading, will be rejected when tested in the light of comparative biology and further taxonomic study. Fortunately, Vaurie belongs to the moderate reformers. He does not go as far in generic merging as some taxonomic left-wingers, who even propose to merge *Carpodacus* in *Carduelis* or to put all the lapwings of the world in a single collective genus *Vanellus*.

The foregoing nomenclatorial criticism is obviously a matter of opinion. It does not in the least touch on the essence of Vaurie's book, which, owing to its immense amount of important information, will be indispensable for many years to come.—ERWIN STRESEMANN.

Birds of Alaska.—Ira N. Gabrielson and Frederick C. Lincoln. 1959. xiii + 922 pp., 10 col. pls. by E. R. Kalmbach and O. J. Murie. \$15. The Stackpole Co., Norrisburg, Penna. and Wildlife Management Institute, Washington, D. C.—This timely work provides the first comprehensive account of Alaskan bird life. The authors have drawn not only upon extensive personal experience, and on the scattered previous literature, but also on the unpublished data in the files of the Fish and Wildlife Service. There are introductory chapters on the history of Alaskan ornithology, on interesting aspects of the Alaskan avifauna, migration, Alaskan ecological zones, and introduced game birds (none established). The body of the book is a summary report of each species and subspecies known from Alaska. For each form there are English, scientific and native names, a brief description, and accounts of nest and eggs, general range, Alaskan range, and "haunts and habits". The section on Alaskan range is of special interest, for much of the information is new or has appeared in scattered papers; the authority for each statement is given. The Alaskan data are, of course, more detailed than what appears in the A.O.U. Check-list, and in some cases rather different. A useful Alaskan gazetteer compiled by Myra A. Putnam, accompanied by an outline map, and a full Alaskan bird bibliography are included. Although the manuscript was completed as of July 1, 1956, an appendix calls attention to species or subspecies collected or photographed for the first time in Alaska as late as June, 1958.

Taxonomy and nomenclature are essentially those of the A.O.U. Check-list (1957), but as the main text had been prepared a couple of years before, subspecific vernaculars appear (as originally contemplated by the A.O.U. Check-list Committee) and there are divergences in a few specific names. Contrary to the Check-list, the Green-winged Teals of the Old World and the New, *Anas crecca* and *carolinensis*, are considered conspecific. Such treatment has been urged by many ornithologists; it is surprising here only because this book reports that on

the Aleutians (including the same islands) both *A. carolinensis* and the Aleutian *A. crecca nimia* (like nominate *crecca* except for larger size) are breeding—without indicating to what extent, if any, hybridization is evident.

Ornithologically Alaska is one of the least known and most interesting parts of North America. It still contains large areas of unspoiled wilderness and is a natural laboratory for the study of speciation and evolutionary trends. The 321 species reported are represented by 414 races. Many Old World species occur in Alaska as breeders or wanderers, and some meet or approach their New World representatives. As the Rockies reach the Pacific coast in Alaska, that barrier between eastern and western forms disappears, and the warming of the climate has enabled southern birds to move increasingly into arctic regions. The various island chains provide striking examples of insular subspeciation. This book will serve as a foundation and stimulation for the detailed zoogeographic and ecological studies that need to be done.—EUGENE EISENMANN.

The Avifauna of Trinidad and Tobago.—G. C. A. Junge and G. F. Mees. 1958. Zoologische Verhandlungen, no. 37: 1-172, maps, Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie, Leiden, Netherlands.—This comprehensive report, designed to cover all birds recorded from the area, supplements that of Belcher and Smooker entitled "Birds of the Colony of Trinidad and Tobago" (*Ibis*, 1934-1937). Written in English, it includes 365 species, and is based chiefly on collections obtained by the junior author from June 1953 to February 1954, comprising 835 specimens of 178 species. One new subspecies, (*Pipra erythrocephala flavissima*), is described, and several forms are added to the avifauna of Trinidad.

In addition to field observations and remarks on specimens taken, short descriptions are given of every species. These will be helpful to the visiting ornithologist, for there is as yet no hand-book on the birds of these rich neotropical islands. There is also a useful bibliography.

The sequence of Oscine families will confuse American ornithologists, for the "Emberizidae", which here include the "Richmondeninae", "Thraupinae", "Tersininae", and "Coerebinae", are placed after the thrushes and gnatcatchers, and are separated from the Fringillidae by the Parulidae, Vireonidae and Icteridae. If the authors had perused more carefully the "Catalogue of Birds of the British Museum" and the "Catalogue of Birds of the Americas" they would have noted that *Pardirallus maculatus*, *Chlorestes notatus*, *Dendroica tigrina*, and *Dendroica fusca* have been recorded from Tobago, and *Sporophila americana* from Trinidad. *Panyptila cayennensis* is listed from Tobago—presumably in reliance on the statement of Belcher and Smooker that Dalmas' collector obtained it there; but the only swift recorded from Tobago by Dalmas is "*Chaetura guyanensis* Hartert", the bird now called *Ch. cinereiventris lawrencei* Ridgway.

Several species accepted as indigenous to Tobago seem to have been based solely on sight identifications and, in the opinion of this reviewer, should have hypothetical status. Among the latter I would even include *Butorides striatus*, considered by Mees to be the "most common species of heron on both islands", although all recorded specimens of the genus from Tobago, including one obtained by Mees, have been *virescens*. It is apparent that much remains to be learned concerning the avifauna of Trinidad and Tobago, and that the time has come for selective collecting.—J. BOND.

An Australian Bird Book. A Complete Guide to the Birds of Australia.—J. A. Leach. 9th ed.; revised and rewritten by P. C. Morrison. 1958. xvi + 224 pp. 32 col. pls., many figs. Price, 32s. 6d. Whitcombe & Tombs Pty. Ltd., 332 Collins St., Melbourne, Australia.—Leach died in 1929. In the ensuing nearly thirty years extensive progress in ornithology had effected no corresponding impression on his "An Australian Bird Book", once an extremely useful volume for teachers, students and bird watchers, well-illustrated and concise. The reviser, P. Crosbie Morrison, was not a scientific ornithologist, but an all-around naturalist with an extensive listening public. He could reach them by the presentation of material in the popular style with which they were familiar. Accordingly Leach's famous "lecture" has been practically re-written, the descriptions of species have been reconstructed, old illustrations restored and new half-tone pictures interspersed.

Whilst it was desired to retain the general scientific arrangement of earlier editions, based on Bowdler Sharpe, the need for modification was apparent, and Peters' "Check-list" (to the extent of the published volumes) and Wetmore's systematic classification were largely followed as to the grouping of genera within orders, though not necessarily as to the sequence of orders *inter se*. Morrison's death prior to completion of his revision resulted in the Passeriformes being presented precisely as Leach had dealt with that group.

Despite the attendant weaknesses from the viewpoint of technical ornithology, this revision will again make available to Australian bush-walkers and bird observers what Leach intended—a handy field guide. To American visitors, and others interested in the unique Australian avifauna, the new Leach will be useful and instructive.—CHARLES E. BRYANT.

Pirates and Predators. The Piratical and Predatory Habits of Birds.—Colonel R. Meinertzhagen. 1959. 230 pp., 18 col. pls., chiefly by G. E. Lodge; 26 monochrome pls., from photographs and paintings. Price, 70 s. Oliver and Boyd, London.—This splendidly produced book which has been under preparation for some years, is, as the author told me, sold at cost. The paintings by the late G. E. Lodge were evidently commissioned for the work as they illustrate incidents here related in print for the first time. Among them are paintings of several little-known birds of prey, such as the Teita Falcon and the black Korean form of Steller's Sea Eagle. A few of the photographs have, I believe, been published elsewhere, but some of them, such as the magnificent view of a diving osprey are well worth having in book form.

The text considers the hunting habits of predatory birds and also their piratical ways of stealing food from other birds. There is also a section on what Colonel Meinertzhagen calls "autolycism", or the manner in which birds make use of man and his paraphernalia, including buildings.

The treatment is highly anecdotal, and even capricious, while the coverage of the literature, as the author himself admits, is by no means complete. Yet many of the observations from the author's varied experiences will be of interest to the student of bird behavior. The book deals for the most part with hawks and owls, but also with "amateur" predators in many families, such as gulls, crows, and others.

In 1957 the reviewer had the pleasure of accompanying a party including Colonel Meinertzhagen on an 1800 mile motor trip in Africa. As I sat beside the laconic and uncomplaining campaigner, then in his 80th year, his gun poised always across his knees, he occasionally marked the course of a distant Bateleur, or a hillside on which he had led a military skirmish in the First World War. One

came to see in him a spirit as untamed and free as that of the eagle whose shadow we traced across the stark African landscape.—DEAN AMADON.

Georgia Birds. Thomas D. Burleigh. 1958. xix + 746 pp., 35 col. pls. by George M. Sutton, 13 photo. pls., maps, text figs. Price \$12.50. Univ. Oklahoma Press, Norman, Okla.—This handsomely printed, but exceptionally bulky tome follows the format usual in many recent state bird books. A scholarly history of Georgia ornithology by W. W. Griffin, and a useful description of the physiographic and biogeographic regions by R. A. Norris, introduce the systematic species account. Subspecies (where more than one occurs in Georgia) are given the same treatment as species, and vernacular subspecific names are supplied. Under each included form data are provided as to distribution, status in Georgia (including migration and egg dates), and "habits and recognition" (including habitat, nesting, general behavior and appearance). A Georgia bibliography and a hypothetical list of birds reported but not collected complete the work. The photographs of Georgia habitats are very fine. Sutton's watercolors each depict a single species, mostly familiar birds; several illustrate local subspecies or include little-known nestling plumages. We wish there had been more of these. The color reproduction will prove disappointing to those who have seen the originals.—E. EISENMANN.

Check-list and Bibliography on the Occurrence of Insects in Birds' Nests.—Ellis A. Hicks. 1959. 681 pp. Iowa State College Press, Ames, Iowa. Price, \$8.50. This work is of world-wide scope and consists of two check-lists, a bibliography, and an index. The entomological check-list gives, under each insect order, family, and species, the birds in whose nests such insect has been found, with the bibliographic reference. The ornithological check-list cites, under each bird species, in a similar manner, the insects found. In each case the orders (and, within each taxon, the families, genera, and species) are listed alphabetically. The index includes all taxa above species, and thus facilitates ready reference.—E. EISENMANN.

A Day at Flores Moradas. Recorded by W. W. H. Gunn. 12" 33 1/3 RPM. Price, \$5.95. Federation of Ontario Naturalists, 187 Highbourne Road, Toronto 7, Canada. (In U. S.: Curtiss and Weir, 54 Priscilla Place, Trumbull, Conn.)—This is the first published record of South American bird voices. It was made in Venezuela, at a cattle ranch on the Llanos near the Guárico River. The record is designed to recreate the dawn to dusk atmosphere at the ranch, with the voices of some thirty birds and a few other animals. Among the characteristic species recorded are Hoatzin (*Opisthocomus*), ibis (*Phimosus infuscatus*), lapwing (*Belonopterus*), Black-collared Hawk (*Busarellus*), caracara (*Caracara*), wren (*Campylorhynchus nuchalis*), mockingbird (*Mimus gilvus*), cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*), and oriole (*Icterus nigrogularis*). It is very interesting to compare the vocalizations of many of the birds here recorded with those of their allies farther north. Species are identified only on the jacket, which unfortunately misspells several of the scientific names. The English names employed are in some instances unfamiliar. Unless acquainted with the technical designations, most Americans would fail to recognize the Black-bellied and White-faced Tree Ducks under the names "Red-billed" and "Black-billed" or to realize that the "Pygmy Owl" recorded is the species (another race) called Ferruginous Owl in the A.O.U. Check-list. The "Inca Dove" recorded is the Scaled Dove (*Scardafella squammata*), usually regarded as a species different from the northern *S. inca*. These comments do not detract from the high quality or value of the recording; they merely point to the growing need for some uniformity in English nomenclature on a Western Hemisphere basis.—E. EISENMANN.