

versational style, and also for the dependable quotations. Educators also are welcoming the book, and are ordering copies for use in the schools.

It is unfortunate that the book is not letter perfect. How much misstatement is due to "printers' conspiracy" perhaps those who have had things printed can tell.—HELEN S. PRATT, *Secretary, California Audubon Society, January 13, 1923.*

"A CHECK LIST OF THE BIRDS OF ILLINOIS"* BY BENJAMIN T. GAULT, has recently been brought out by the Illinois Audubon Society. As with previous publications of that Society, this list shows every evidence of care in its preparation. Mr. Gault's extensive knowledge of the birds of Illinois, acquired through many years of field work and observation, combined with painstaking accuracy in the preparation of his materials, has resulted in a most creditable publication, one that will be useful to bird students of the state.

The publication is a "Check List," a pocket manual, and, as such, condensed to the utmost; the necessity of such condensation forestalls any criticism of the system of symbols, otherwise rather irritating to the reader who has to master their meaning. Broad margins are left for any notations by those using the list.

An interesting feature is the map of Illinois showing life zones, by Robert Ridgway. Transition, Upper Austral, and three sections of Lower Austral are figured, divisions that have been noted by the reviewer with considerable interest. Some years ago the writer chanced to be doing field work in Will County, just within the area here considered as Transition. Red-bellied Woodpecker, Cardinal, and Mockingbird were nesting there, as well as some other southern species that we do not associate with the Transition zone; but, on the other hand, the Saw-whet Owl was there in summer, and a litter of Red Foxes was discovered. Zonal lines are hard to indicate in such a region; obviously they can not be given as definitely as in most sections of the west. There is probably no one who

understands local conditions affecting animal life in Illinois better than Mr. Ridgway, and his map of the life zones of the state is certainly of value as expressing his opinion of the manner in which such divisions should be indicated in this part of the Mississippi Valley.—H. S. SWARTH, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, January 6, 1923.*

Since the above paragraphs went to press the reviewer has read Mr. Taverner's criticism of the same publication (*Canadian Field-Naturalist*, vol. 36, 1922, p. 179) with the utmost surprise at the severity of his strictures upon it. Some of his generalities are true enough, such as his objection to "the implied assumption that present day ornithological experts knew as much about birds in their youth as they do today", and the accompanying caution as to the acceptance of their early records; but these are not criticisms to be levelled at Mr. Gault's publication. This is a *pocket check list*, with information condensed to the utmost. There are more voluminous and more pretentious books (not dating so very far back, either) dealing with the same state and with surrounding territory (Kumlien and Hollister, *The Birds of Wisconsin*, 1903; Anderson, *The Birds of Iowa*, 1907; Woodruff, *The Birds of the Chicago Area*, 1907; Cory, *The Birds of Illinois and Wisconsin*, 1909), containing detailed information regarding the species questioned by Mr. Taverner. Those are the authors who should have sifted out the bad records from the reliable ones, and if they have failed to do so they are open to criticism to that extent. In the face of their acceptance of certain species the compiler of this condensed check list certainly could not omit those names without laying himself open to just as severe, and more deserved, criticism than that voiced by Mr. Taverner. The space at his disposal forbade discussion of doubtful points.

In connection with Mr. Taverner's objection to the sequence of species in the list of 200 common birds, beginning with the thrushes rather than the grebes, it is gratifying to learn that he feels that tinkering with the accepted system "is, to any one taking an active interest in modern ornithological literature, an exasperation rather than the assistance it is claimed to be." There are others who have felt the same way about certain other departures from current usage.—H. S. S.

*Check List of the Birds of Illinois, together with a short list of 200 commoner birds and Allen's Key to Birds' Nests. Published by the Illinois Audubon Society, 10 South La Salle Street, Chicago, 1922, 80 pp., 1 fig. (map).