

PHILLIPS' NATURAL HISTORY OF THE DUCKS.*—With the publication of this work a new epoch in American ornithology dawns. This epoch is the counterpart of that which has held sway abroad, in England especially, for many decades, marked by the appearance of elaborate monographs of groups of birds covering the whole world. Of course the designation of a new American "epoch" thus characterized is purely a prophetic venture on my part, as reviewer. Having been bold enough to go this far, however, I may as well go a step farther and declare at once what is my bona fide conclusion after close scrutiny of volume I, namely, that Phillips' "Natural History of the Ducks" sets a new high standard of combined scholarly, literary, and artistic merit, in America.

Let me say frankly that when I started to examine this book, I was in a hypercritical attitude of mind. I wanted and rather expected to find serious faults in the book. For instance, I scanned some twelve pages for typographical errors, and errors in geography. When I found just one mistake, Alborni for Alberni (a place on Vancouver Island), on page 129, I began to "be impressed". For this is a wonderfully clean showing, as anyone so disposed can verify by critical attention to almost any current book or magazine. I have learned to give much weight to typography in arriving at an estimate as to the trustworthiness of an investigator's published output; as a rule, if he has been meticulously careful in proof-reading he has been meticulously careful also in assembling the facts he records and in making the generalizations he sets forth.

Examination of other features of Phillips' book tends to substantiate the favorable estimate just expressed. Taking the chapter on the Fulvous Tree Duck (pp. 128-139), which species I happen to know something about, as a probably fair sample of all the species treatments, I find that the literature has been exhaustively ransacked, that the known facts to date are all incorporat-

*A Natural History of | the Ducks | by | John C. Phillips | Associate Curator of Birds in the Museum | of Comparative Zoology at Harvard College | with plates in color and in black and white | from drawings by | Frank W. Benson, Allan Brooks | and | Louis Agassiz Fuertes | Volume I | *Plectropterina*, *Dendrocygninae*, *Anatina* (in part) [vignette] | Boston and New York | Houghton Mifflin Company | The Riverside Press Cambridge | 1922 [December ?]; 4to pp. xii+ 264, 18 pls., 27 maps.

ed, that this information is logically classified, that there is a commendable degree of conciseness (there is no repetition or "padding"), and that the language used is sober—without any of the flamboyancy or extravagance of style which mars the scientific value of some recent books.

An especially useful feature to the serious student is the system of side-heads employed throughout each text account, by means of which the reader can quickly find the particular kind of information sought, for any one species, or, comparatively, for all the species in a given group.

While Volume I does not happen to deal with any North American species of "ducks" outside of the Tree-ducks, and hence on that score is not of so great local interest as future volumes promise to be, a very great deal of immediate value to Americans does appear in this volume, in the "Introduction" (pp. 3-40). Here are found terse discussions of general distribution of the ducks, of migration, of local movements (including the phenomenon of post-breeding dispersal, in some species irrespective of the cardinal points), of plumage (including the latest views on the complex question of molts in ducks), of special senses, of association of species, of courtship, etc.

While there is some concisely written and useful matter relative to the food value of species and upon local methods of hunting, the sportsman's point of view does not dominate the book, as it does in so many of the English works upon game birds. I will here quote some statements made by Phillips which illustrate his views on certain questions.

"After all, real sport is measured by its demand upon skill, patience, and woodcraft, and shooting baited ducks over a large flock of decoys, while seated in a comfortable box, to say nothing of a punter and a dog to chase the cripples, does not call for a very large measure of any of these qualities. . . . As a matter of fact any method by which ducks are stalked is far more sportsmanlike than where the birds are brought to the shooter" (p. 32).

"Many keen duck-shooters find themselves getting more and more sentimental as they grow older, and these are the men who originate all our worth-while reforms, not the type that has been brought up to look with holy horror upon guns and shooting-men" (p. 31).

"To sum up . . . [the estimates giv-

en] serve to show us what enormous numbers of wild-fowl actually exist, and can continue to do so provided they have the proper places to live and breed in and are given reasonable protection. We must remember that they withstood the most persistent and destructive methods of hunting, such as the decoy systems of England and Holland, so long as their feeding grounds remained intact, but just as soon as these were reduced beyond a certain point, the numbers which were annually taken fell away rapidly" (p. 37).

Turning now to the illustrational features of the work in hand, I can simply say that, aside from the maps, they are admirable both from the standpoint of art and of ornithological delineation. Nearly all the colored drawings reproduced in this volume are from the brush of Fuertes and are, I believe, his "best yet". The processes of reproduction, by many impressions on a high-grade, non-glazed paper, have brought remarkably satisfactory and lasting results. As to the maps, however, the mechanical style in which they are handled does not appeal to me. Much more delicate lines could have been employed, and each map could have been run in the text on distribution (instead of on one side of a whole separate sheet).

The one, and outstanding, drawback to Phillips' "Natural History of the Ducks" is its expensiveness—fifty dollars per volume, I hear. This puts it out of reach of practically all beginning bird students, just those who should profit by having high standards of ornithological literature before them, and probably beyond the reach of a large proportion of advanced students as well. Furthermore, the size of the edition, I understand, is just 400 copies, this small number prescribing a deplorable limitation in distribution.

I wonder if it might not have been possible to issue a special edition *minus* the plates, and on inexpensive paper, so that the text alone would have been available widely to students. After all, does not the kernel of ornithological record lie in *text*, rather than in illustration? Carefully couched descriptions and statements can take the place in large measure of even the best type of illustration. From a strictly scientific point of view, when the factor of expense must be weighed, text is more to be desired than pictures, and the latter must in extremity be dispensed with altogether.

Finally, be it known, the enthusiastic approval of Phillips' "Natural History of the Ducks" here expressed has not been induced by the receipt of a complimentary copy "for the favor of review"! None has been received, nor is one expected. The copy we have studied was loaned us by a fortunate friend.—J. GRINNELL, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, February 18, 1923.*

MINUTES OF COOPER CLUB MEETINGS

NORTHERN DIVISION

DECEMBER.—The regular meeting of the Northern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was held at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, December 28, 1922, at 8 p. m. President Swarth was in the chair with the following in attendance: Mesdames Allen, Delport, Calvert Mead, and Schlesinger; the Misses Burk and Flinn; Messrs. Bryant, Bunker, Carriger, Cooper, Evermann, Gignoux, Grinnell, Hudson, Labarthe, LaJeunesse, Mailliard, Miller, Storer, Tyler, and Wright. Among the visitors present were Mrs. Cooper, Mrs. Swarth, Mr. Labarthe, Jr., and Mr. Wilson.

The minutes of the November meeting of the Northern Division were read and approved followed by the reading of the minutes of the Southern Division for November. Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Cantelow were proposed for membership by Mrs. J. T. Allen, and Miss Susan T. Mackey, Cloyne Court, Berkeley, by Mrs. Edwin Mead. Dr. Evermann reported for the committee appointed to consider the Public Shooting Grounds Bill that no more definite information had been obtained as yet through correspondence with headquarters at Washington. He offered the motion that the club give approval to the bill as adopted by the Fish and Game Commission of California. His motion was seconded by Mr. Wright. An amendment was offered by Dr. Grinnell, striking out the amendments proposed by the Fish and Game Commission. This amendment was duly seconded but lost. Mr. Storer then offered an amendment that the club approve the bill except the clause which permits the owner of property to hunt on his own premises without a hunter's license. The amendment was accepted by the original movers and was carried.

Nominations for officers for the coming year were then called for. Mr. Cooper was nominated for president by Evermann, seconded by Grinnell; Mr. Cooper nominated