

To all appearances Mr. Bent has been most thorough in his assembling of known facts, and his compilation of the scattered contributions of other observers is supplemented to no small degree by original matter of his own. His "Life Histories" are volumes to be eagerly anticipated and to be kept for handy reference by everyone interested in birds. The pity is that the series can not be pushed to completion within a reasonably short time.

In the nomenclature used, there are various departures from the rulings of the A. O. U. Committee, which I still regard as an unfortunate attitude (see Condor, xxv, 1925, p. 35). The problem of the true relationships of the several forms of *Branta canadensis* is mentioned, but not discussed at any length. A real contribution to this subject is found in Mr. Bent's statement of the similarity of the downy young of *Branta canadensis occidentalis* and *B. c. minima*, and their dissimilarity from the same stage in *B. c. canadensis*.

In the two volumes covering the Anseres the plates are segregated at the back of the books; in the preceding volumes they are scattered through the text, a preferable procedure, to my notion. It is always a nuisance to leave reading matter in order to search for a distant illustration.

There is a detail in the manner of publication of the "Life Histories" that arouses one's curiosity. The several volumes are each issued as separate "Bulletins" of the United States National Museum, even though two of the volumes (as those dealing with the Anseres) are indicated as "parts" and bear the same title. In the exactly similar case of Ridgway's "Birds of North and Middle America", a long series of volumes issued through the years, each appears as a separate part of "Bulletin 50". One wonders at the different treatment.—H. S. SWARTH.

TOWNSEND'S "SAND DUNES AND SALT MARSHES".*—This book is a happy combination of correct literature and good natural history. It reminds us in these respects of Bradford Torrey's "Field Days in California", therefore to be read by a fellow naturalist with mental comfort and with appreciative interest. The local setting is in the neighborhood of Ipswich,

Massachusetts; but the painstaking observations recorded and logical inferences made can most of them be verified in many another part of North America. Dr. Townsend's book, in our estimation, deserves to be placed on the rather short list of "best books" on American natural history and therefore should be read widely. We can, of course, cite here only samples of the very many points made by the author that strike us as of real scientific merit. Skipping over, then, a great deal of very attractive matter concerning the behavior of sand-dunes and of their avian and other living inhabitants, we select the following paragraphs for quotation, from the last chapter, which is entitled "Bird Genealogy".

"Scratch a bird and you will find a reptile, can be said as truly as the similar trite remark concerning civilized man and savage, with the difference that one must scratch much more deeply in the case of the bird.

"The English sparrow, although fond of bathing in mud puddles, like all street gamins, would never be mistaken for a water bird, yet in its early infancy it is a capital swimmer, as I discovered in a perfectly innocent and excusable manner. Having occasion to shut an outside blind in my city house, I found that I had torn down a huge nest of street bric-a-brac that English sparrows had built between it and the wall. Two young had fallen to the ground below and were pounced on by a dog, two others—fat, misshapen things, mostly stomach and devoid of all but the black lines of incipient feathers—remained on my hands. As I could not rebuild their nest, and as I was entirely unprepared to furnish them with properly modified food, and, moreover, as a lover of native birds and a sworn enemy of these avian rats, I was bound to destroy them, I cast about for a method which would least disturb my peace of mind, for I did not think they would much care, being so infantile and inexperienced. I therefore dropped them into a basin of tepid water, expecting the inert masses to sink, or at least that their wobbly heads would fall below the surface. But presto-change! the creatures at once became endowed with life and vigor as if upon their native heath once more, and, with a combination of rapid wing-strokes and leg action and with necks out-stretched, they scudded across the surface of the miniature pond. They could not have done it better if they had tried, and I do not imagine they tried at all, but that the

* Sand Dunes | and | Salt Marshes | by | Charles Wendell Townsend | [4 lines] | New Edition | With an Introduction by | Ralph Hoffmann | And numerous Illustrations from Photographs | [seal] | Boston | L. C. Page & Company | Publishers. || "New Edition, April, 1925": pp. 10 + (1)—311, frontispiece + 93 other half-tone illustrations on inserted plate paper, usually on both sides. \$3.50.

action was reflex and instinctive,—entirely willy-nilly on their part.

"Blood will out, the crocodile ancestry was working. To make sure that this was not an accident, with malice aforethought, I dropped a young red-winged blackbird into the pool below his nest. He, too, performed in exactly the same manner, and safely reached some reeds, up which he scrambled, and was there well taken care of by his excited parents. It is probable that many a passerine bird, nesting over the water, has been thus saved from destruction by this return to primitive methods.

"Further experimentation showed me that very young birds generally moved the wings alternately, while older ones always flapped both wings together as in flight. From this one would infer that the primitive reptilian scramble was naturally an alternate method, while the simultaneous method was simply the more advanced style used in flight. . . ."

"I recently placed a half-grown domestic pigeon in a wash tub of tepid water. With head and neck erect the bird swam with rapid alternate strokes of the feet to the side of the tub. The wings were arched up and waved slightly,—not stretched out and flapped in the water, as in the case of the sparrow. Its position was like that of a duck but low in the water, which was due, no doubt, to its well-filled crop and its lack of buoyant feathers. Progress was much more rapid than on land, where the bird stumbled awkwardly along,—indeed it had never before left the nest."

Thus, Dr. Townsend's homely observations continually bring out materials for the liveliest sort of philosophizing. The environs of most anyone's home city will provide the active seeker and interpreter with an exhaustless supply of equally fresh natural history—"new to science" in large measure.—J. GRINNELL, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley, July 21, 1925.*

MINUTES OF COOPER CLUB MEETINGS

SOUTHERN DIVISION

MAY.—The Cooper Ornithological Club, Southern Division, held its regular monthly meeting Sunday, May 31, 1925, at "Las Leyes", the delightful home of Mr. and Mrs. J. Eugene Law in Altadena. About thirty-five members and friends were present to enjoy Mr. and Mrs. Law's hospitality.

The meeting was called to order by President Wyman, and minutes of the April meeting were read and approved. April minutes of the Northern Division were read by title only.

The following names were proposed for membership: Paul F. Covel, 4350 Cleveland Ave., San Diego, Calif., by Clinton G. Abbott; Oliver Ames Lothrop, M. D., 101 Beacon St., Boston, Mass., by W. Lee Chambers; Mrs. Mabel C. McVitty, 1272 Summit Ave., Pasadena, Calif., by Mrs. Myrtle S. Edwards; Miss Louisa P. Merritt, P. O. Box 315, Pasadena, Calif., by Mrs. Myrtle S. Edwards; Florence C. Mull (Mrs. Bert F.), Foothill Blvd., Glendora, Calif., by J. Eugene Law; Mrs. Oliver S. Ormsley, 5658 Blackstone Ave., Chicago, Ill., by W. Lee Chambers; Laurence B. Potter, Gower Ranch, Eastend, Sask., by W. Lee Chambers; William Richardson, care of Walter L. Richardson, R. F. D. 3, Box 243, Porterville, Calif., by J. Eugene Law; Miss Elsey R. Taft, Banning, Calif., by Roland C. Ross.

The secretary was in receipt of a letter from Dr. C. O. Esterly signifying his willingness to act, as requested, as representative of the Southern Division at the Portland meeting of the Pacific Division of the American Association for the Advancement of Science next month.

Mr. Chambers raised the question of making a change in the regular meeting night of the Club, as a number of prominent members are unable to attend on Thursday evenings. His motion that a committee of three be appointed to investigate and see if some evening more generally convenient could be determined upon, was seconded by Dr. Bishop and duly carried, whereupon Mr. Wyman appointed Mr. Chambers as chairman to act with Mr. Law and Mr. Allen on such committee.

Two communications were read by Dr. Bishop; one a request for contributions to the Ernest Harold Baynes Memorial fund, the other from the New England Bird Banding Association, calling attention to the probability of the total extinction, in the near future, of the Heath Hen, if some active measures are not taken to save this bird.

Miss Miller told of a Screech Owl having been seen on several different days to frequent the bird bath in her yard, and asked for an explanation of its uncommon behavior. Mr. Law suggested the presence of mites on the bird as a possible reason for its unusual desire for bathing. Mrs. Edwards reported the finding of a Night-