

The fallibility of human testimony is a factor that must be given due allowance in matters ornithological as well as in every other connection. We should seriously heed the statements recently made in this regard by a man who is a professional lawyer by training and practice and who comes from a long line of successful lawyers. Mr. S. Prentiss Baldwin says (*Bird-Lore*, July-August, 1925, p. 236): "I feel that a law training in evidence would be the best foundation for all scientists Each year of practice of ornithology brings me more to appreciate this lesson from my early practice of law, that I should not too quickly believe even that which I think I see and hear." In discussing the pros and cons of the House Wren controversy, Mr. Baldwin points out how easy it may be to come to erroneous conclusions on the basis of circumstantial evidence only. It is easy to observe partially or fleetingly and incorrectly, and then to make inferences which as a consequence are altogether inconsistent with the real facts.

The Illinois Audubon Society "Bulletin" (Summer, 1925) contains an "Appreciation" of Ruthven Deane, by Wilfred H. Osgood, that arouses our warmest admiration. The statement that "to ornithologists the country over, the one principal attraction of the great middle western metropolis has been Ruthven Deane" is a generous compliment, coming from the curator of the department of zoology of a great museum situated in that same city, but the truth thereof needs no support.

We are again under obligation to Mr. Frank N. Bassett for compiling the index for the present volume of *THE CONDOR*. The work involved in such an undertaking is understood and appreciated best by those who have done it themselves. The editors gratefully acknowledge their relief at this lessening of their labors.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

FIELD BOOK OF BIRDS OF THE SOUTHWESTERN UNITED STATES. By LUTHER E. WYMAN AND ELIZABETH BURNELL. Pp. XXIV + 308, 4 colored plates (frontispiece and 3 life-zone maps), many text figs. Houghton Mifflin Company. Price \$3.50. (Our copy received October 5, 1925.)

In their avowed purpose "to aid the beginner and to meet the needs of schools

and of the amateur bird student", the authors have produced a handbook for the ready identification of birds that is conceived along original lines and contains many excellent features. The territory covered includes all of Arizona, southern California, and the southern extremity of Nevada.

Introductory chapters include instruction in the use of the book, a discussion of life-zones with special reference to conditions in the southwest, a "glossary", and "explanatory notes". The nomenclature and the order of the A. O. U. *Check-list* are followed. Under each species there are statements (condensed to the utmost) of size, color and general appearance, a few words as to habits, and a paragraph dealing with manner of occurrence. This printed matter is supplemented by small black and white sketches of nearly all the species treated, and by small outline maps showing distribution. The bird drawings, though small, are excellent, and where they concern species showing definite and easily recognizable markings, should serve a useful purpose. Very sensibly, no attempt has been made thus to figure more than one of closely related subspecies.

The plan of the work is admirable, and it is well carried out. This is a handbook that can be cordially endorsed; it should be decidedly useful to the rapidly increasing army of bird students in the southwest. There are slips, of course, but mostly they are not of a nature to detract from the usefulness of the publication, considering the clientele for which it is intended. Then too, as far as critical comments are concerned, the really important criticisms of a book of this nature should be sought later from the people who have been using it. One thing, though, does seem worthy of remark, and that is the authors' apparent shakiness in their attitude toward subspecies, reflected in statements such as that comparing the Ant-eating Woodpecker with "its subspecies, the California Woodpecker"; and comparing the Black-fronted Warbler with "the Audubon, of which this is a subspecies". This idea, that one geographic race is a subspecies of another (that is, one subordinate to the other), is just the conception that modern ornithology is trying to break away from; it seems to be a difficult matter (made so largely by our system of nomenclature) to substitute the logical view that all subspecies of any one species are parts, coördinate so far as naming is concerned, of one widespread and inclusive kind of bird.—H. S. SWARTH.