

ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE ¹

CHECK-LIST OF BIRDS OF THE WORLD, Volume 4. By James Lee Peters. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1940: 6 x 9 in., xii + 291 pp. \$4.00.

Volume 4 of Peters' Check-List, uniform in high standards of scholarship with its predecessors, treats the cuckoos, owls, goatsuckers, and swifts. It includes 114 genera, 464 species, and 1259 forms, and thus covers a smaller number of birds than any of the preceding volumes.

The tedious work of compilation is carried out in a thoroughly competent and accurate manner, but the Check-List is far from being a mere compilation. The author, with his wide knowledge of the literature and taxonomy of the class, has contributed a large amount of original matter in each volume. In many cases independent study of the more critical groups was made and resulted in the reclassification of entire families. Among the birds covered by the present volume, the owls had been particularly neglected, and the author's research in this family is especially welcome.

Surprisingly few of the North American birds included in this volume bear different names from those of the A. O. U. Check-List. Three genera, *Micrathene* Coues, *Aegolius* Kaup, and *Apus* Scopoli, are used in preference to *Micropallas*, *Cryptoglaux*, and *Micropus*, respectively, of the A. O. U. These changes are necessary under the "one-letter rule" of the International Rules of Zoological Nomenclature. The use of *Apus* unfortunately calls for a change in the A. O. U. subfamily, family, subordinal, and ordinal names for the group of swifts allied to "*Micropus*." Following certain European writers, Peters calls these Apodinae, Apodidae, Apodi, and Apodiformes, respectively. He has overlooked, however, Burmeister's much earlier use of the term Apodidae for a family of crustaceans. This name is still in current use among carcinologists. Burmeister's action precludes employing this term for the swifts and would seem to also preclude the use of its derivatives for ordinal, subordinal, or subfamily terms. One cannot use the terms Micropodidae or Cypselidae as the family name of the swifts, either, since these names are based on synonyms of *Apus*. Article 5 of the International Rules states: "The name of a family or subfamily is to be changed when the name of the type genus is changed." The best solution of this unhappy situation seems to be the erection of a new family name for the swifts, *Chaeturidae*, nom. nov., with *Chaetura* Stephens as the type genus. The suborder may be known as *Chaeturae*, nom. nov., and the order *Chaeturiformes*, nom. nov. A new subfamily term for the swifts allied to *Apus* is also required. These birds may be called Panyptilinae, nom. nov., with *Panyptila* Cabanis as type genus.

Peters uses *Bubo virginianus wapacuthu* (Gmelin), *Nyctea scandiaca* (Linnaeus), and *Strix varia georgica* Latham as earlier and applicable names for *B. v. subarcticus*, *N. nyctea*, and *S. v. alleni* of the A. O. U. List. Two genera recognized by the A. O. U., *Scotiaptex* and *Antrostomus*, are combined with *Strix* and *Caprimulgus*, and three forms of accidental occurrence in North America, *Cuculus optatus*, *Surnia ulula pallasi*, and *Scotiaptex nebulosa barbata*, are synonymized with other Old World forms. The Long-eared Owl is treated as a race of *Asio otus*. Seven subspecies of owls, most of them described since the publication of the latest edition of the A. O. U. Check-List, are accorded recognition by Peters, although one of them is said to be "doubtfully separable."

Although the text of the work is executed in a thoroughly reliable way, we find that in the introduction Mr. Peters has made a slip when comparing the increase of forms and decrease of recognized genera in the groups covered by Volume 1 of Sharpe's Hand-list. He gives the number of genera and forms in Volume 1 of Sharpe as 830 and 3626, respectively, apparently taking Sir Ray Lankester's count from the preface of Volume 2. He further states that the same groups in his own Check-List comprise 569 genera and 5106 forms, giving a

¹ For additional reviews see pages 172, 190, and 197.

decrease of 261 [31%] in the number of genera and an increase of 1480 [41%] in the number of species and subspecies recognized. All of these figures are incorrect.

In the first place, Sharpe included fossil as well as recent species and genera, so it is not fair to compare his total figures with those of Peters, who gives only recent forms. According to my count, the total number of recent genera included in Volume 1 of Sharpe is 741; of forms 3303. These figures include recently extinct species, which Sharpe gives in antique type like the fossil ones. The total number listed by Peters for the same groups is 662 and 5127 forms, by careful count. This is a decrease of only 79 genera (11%), and an increase of 1824 forms (55%). Broken down to Orders, a comparison of the two lists is as follows:

Order	Genera			Species		Forms	
	Sharpe	Peters	Change	Peters	Sharpe	Peters	Change
Struthioniformes	1	1	0	1	4	6	+2
Rheiformes	1	2	+1	2	3	6	+3
Casuariiformes	2	2	0	8	16	35	+19
Apterygiiformes	1	1	0	3	6	5	-1
Tinamiformes	9	9	0	51	69	118	+49
Sphenisciformes	6	6	0	17	17	22	+5
Gaviiformes	1	1	0	4	5	8	+3
Colymbiformes	7	5	-2	18	25	39	+14
Procellariiformes	25	24	-1	107	121	187	+66
Pelecaniformes	8	9	+1	59	77	126	+49
Ciconiiformes	73	58	-15	124	168	244	+76
Anseriformes	73*	64	-9	170	210*	231	+21
Falconiformes	92	89	-3	289	515	701	+186
Galliformes	95	94	-1	276	476	830	+354
Gruiformes	84	81	-3	205	303	482	+179
Charadriiformes	139	124	-15	315	412	604	+192
Columbiformes	94	63	-31	326	560	889	+329
Strigiformes	30	29	-1	143	316	594	+278
Total	741	662	-79	2118	3303	5127	1824

* Includes "Palamedeidae" omitted by mistake from Volume 1 of Sharpe.

With the completion of Volume 4, Peters has now covered about half (82) of the 165 families of birds. His work is far from being half completed, however, since he has published on only one-third (838) of the estimated 2600 genera, one-third (2783) of the 8500 species, and one-fourth (6570) of the 27,000 described forms of birds. It therefore seems that the estimate of ten volumes needed to cover all the birds of the world will have to be revised upwards to sixteen, even without allowing for the annual increase of some 200 valid described forms. At the present rate of one volume every three years, we must wait until Mr. Peters' eighty-seventh birthday in 1976 to see the Check-List finished.—P. Brodtkorb.

BIRDS OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA. By W. E. Clyde Todd. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1940: 8½ x 11 in., xv + 710 pp., one black and white and 22 colored pls., folding map. \$5.00.

We welcome the publication of Mr. Todd's long-anticipated "Birds of Western Pennsylvania." The introductory sections of this book include accounts of the geography and ornithological history of the area, the author's own field work, and the general features of bird distribution. The author's early training in the U. S. Biological Survey is probably reflected in his decision to use the "Life-zone" concept in his discussion of bird distribution. It is, however, incongruous to find

a rather detailed account of bird distribution by life-zones concluded by the statement that "the attempt to express these faunal differences in terms of the current life-zone divisions is unsatisfactory and confusing" and to read (p. 8) that "Zoologists and botanists . . . have found it unacceptable and unworkable." If so, what significance is there in these pages about Pennsylvania life-zones? One strange statement made in this connection, which we cannot let pass unchallenged is the author's assumption (p. 8) that ornithologists are not zoologists. Most of us would define ornithologists as fortunate zoologists who are using the Class Aves as a medium for the study of zoological problems.

As one would expect in a work produced by Mr. Todd, this book is exceptionally well proof-read and checked. The only typographical error we have found is the citing (p. 496) of volume 2 instead of volume 3 of Forbush's "Birds of Massachusetts." Among ornithological errors we note a repetition of the old beliefs that the Cowbird's incubation period is only 10 days and the Spotted Sandpiper's 15 days, and that the Black-capped Chickadee does not migrate.

It is surprising to find one of Mr. Todd's reputation including in his book so many species whose occurrence is based only on rather questionable sight records. In this category we would place the Louisiana Heron, Iceland Gull, Franklin Gull, Little Gull, Canada Jay, Hoary Redpoll, and Lark Bunting.

The complete accounts of the habits of more than 25 species are contributed by others. These co-authors include B. H. Christy, Ruth Trimble, E. W. Arthur, T. D. Burleigh, and seven other observers.

For the most part the accounts of habits are excellently done but occasionally there appear bits of sentimentalizing or humanizing that are very out of place in a scientific book. For example, no scientist should ever be guilty of writing about a bird's "brazen pride" or "villainous habits" or "merry disposition." Birds are not little humans and a scientist is not increasing knowledge among men by writing as though they were. It is only fair to state that most of these lapses are to be found in the accounts of bird habits contributed by other writers, but the responsibility for their appearance here remains the author's.

We find it hard to understand the author's use of a number of scientific names, which he himself states unequivocally are incorrect, simply because they were used in the 1931 A.O.U. Check-list. The perpetuation of error for the sake of standardization is certainly not the best scientific procedure.

There may be some system behind the author's capitalization of English proper names of bird species but we have failed to fathom it. On some pages he has capitalized consistently but others seem to be an indiscriminate mixture of capitalized and uncapitalized names.

We frankly do not believe the story the author quotes of the Killdeer that put the squad of young Killdeers through close-order drill and we are discouraged to read again in 1940 of the "ruse" employed by the "resourceful" Yellow Warbler to combat the interloping Cowbird. Another questionable suggestion is that the extra nests built or started by Red-wings are perhaps meant as a provision "against peering eyes or prying hands."

The precise distribution of many species is shown by excellent "spot maps"—not the misleading, old-fashioned type of map in which the author draws in a solid distribution zone in which he thinks the species must surely occur. We only wish that the symbols for individual records had been made somewhat larger. In some cases (as p. 393) the maps require very close inspection to be understood.

The volume is handsomely illustrated with a large number of very effective bird portraits by George Miksch Sutton. Many of the pictures are as fine bird portraits as have ever been published. One hundred and eighteen of these pictures are in color and are arranged in a novel and very successful manner whereby all of the birds are reproduced in proportionate size and with but one (in a single case, two) species in a picture. Two to nine of these pictures are repro-

duced on a page, all explanatory text being conveniently placed in corresponding rectangles on the opposite page. The artist has thus avoided the Swiss-family-Robinson groupings forced on many painters by the necessity of showing many species on one plate. The reproduction of a few of the plates in the copies we have seen leaves something to be desired but most are excellent.

This book is unusual among modern bird books in that no photographs have been used as illustrations.

"The Birds of Western Pennsylvania" concludes with an admirable gazetteer of 921 entries, a thoroughly annotated bibliography, and a good index. A new feature of this book is the multiple repetition of a large proportion of the references in separate bibliographies at the close of each species account. It is certainly a convenience to have these, but the repetition of the complete references and even some annotations has added unnecessarily to the bulk of the volume.

We hope that our several criticisms of minor points will not cause anyone to miss the fact that this is one of the most scholarly, useful, and attractive state bird books yet published.—J. VAN TYNE.

THE BIRDS OF BUCKEYE LAKE, OHIO. By Milton B. Trautman. Univ. of Michigan Museum of Zoology Miscellaneous Publications No. 44, May 7, 1940:1-466, 16 pls., 2 maps, \$2.50.

The value of any science lies not so much in its discoveries as in the number of minds which participate in its development.

In Audubon's day the cost of participation in ornithology was exile at the physical frontier. During the ensuing century the theatre of activity moved gradually inward until Margaret Nice proved, in 1937, that any layman can find an ornithological frontier in his (or her) own backyard.

The Nician explorations, however, call for the continuous use of precise ecological techniques such as banding, and a command of the latest researches in avian psychology. To this extent the rank and file are still in the status of admirers of pioneering, rather than pioneers.

The significance of Milton B. Trautman's "Birds of Buckeye Lake" lies in the fact that it explores the ornithology of a "backyard" region with the help of ecological thinking and observation alone, i.e., without the use of precision techniques. Hence "Birds of Buckeye Lake" is something any ornithologist can do in his own region, given only the persistence, imagination, and field skill of Milton B. Trautman.

To me there is something comfortable in this. I admire and emulate the Nician techniques, but I love old-fashioned acumen in the field, and I welcome Trautman's proof of how good a job it can do.

Like Murphy's "Oceanic Birds," Trautman's volume is outstanding not alone for its life histories of species, but especially for its introductory analysis of the region in which they live. Many local works on birds contain an introductory description of the locale, but most such descriptions are lame indeed compared with Trautman's rich history of central Ohio. Geographers, historians, and agronomists can afford to own Trautman's work for its history alone. Ecologists in particular can glean new wisdom from his skillful interpretation of the retrogression of soils, waters, floras, and faunas since the days of first settlement.

The early history of Buckeye Lake is compiled from other authors and old settlers, but since 1906 Trautman has been eye-witness to the local pageant. His intensive studies cover the period 1922-1934, during which time 541 days were spent in the field.

Several of Trautman's methods of study are original. No other ornithologist has followed groups of migrants cross-country by car to note their social organization en route. No other ornithologist has recorded in such detail the characteristic flock formations and behaviors of arriving and departing waterfowl (and few

other lakes lend themselves as well to such studies as does Buckeye). Few other ornithologists know their fishes, mammals, and plants as well as their birds. Trautman's graphic month-by-month record of changes in distribution and abundance is hardly original, but I recall no other author who has applied it to so many species.

So ambitious an undertaking could hardly be wholly free of slips and foibles. Thus Trautman, like the Audubon Society, calls a species list with numbers seen a "census." I prefer to reserve the term "census" for an actual enumeration of the birds present on a given area.

Not the least merit of Trautman's volume is its simplicity and clarity. The reader is never befuddled, nor is he forced to swallow any needless ecological jargon. (One might even conclude that the absence of such jargon is becoming an earmark of ecological competence. The works of Charles Elton, Fraser Darling, and Margaret Nice would likewise support such a view.)

A good bibliography and index add much to the reader's convenience in using "Birds of Buckeye Lake," and a series of excellent photographs add to his pleasure in owning it.

I am puzzled by just one thing: Why did Ohio let Michigan bring out the Trautman volume? The average reader, however, will content himself with being grateful that somebody brought it out.—Aldo Leopold.

A BOOK ON DUCK SHOOTING. By Van Campen Heilner. Penn Publishing Co., Philadelphia, 1939: 6¼ x 9 in., xiii + 540 pp., 16 color pls., 235 photos, many drawings. \$7.50.

This is one of the best duck hunters' books we have seen and holds much of interest for the ornithologist as well. The first 250 pages are devoted to some most entertaining essays on the author's duck hunting experiences in many parts of the world. The essays are very well done but, as the author says, the most valuable part of this book is the appendix, which includes chapters on flight speeds of birds (by May Thacher Cooke), waterfowl flyways (by F. C. Lincoln), modern decoys (by Joel Barber), boats and blinds (by H. L. Betten), sunspots and cycles of abundance in waterfowl (by Ralph De Lury), marshes of the past and future (by Clarence Cottam and Warren S. Bourn), and duck clubs. The final section is a "Guide for Duck Shooters," consisting of small scale drawings of the American species of waterfowl, their scientific names, and their geographical ranges.

Eleven species of ducks and seven of geese are shown in the color plates and a number of others are shown nearly as well in the many excellent drawings, all by Lynn Bogue Hunt. The pictures are admirable and their reproduction good but, unfortunately, they are often very inadequately labeled. For example, a fine colored plate of the three American species of scoters is labeled "Coot Shooting in New England." Other pictures have the name of only one of two or more species figured.

The so-called bibliography at the end of the book is so brief as to be almost useless. Only 28 titles are listed and all data beyond the bare mention of author and title is omitted.

The book is handsomely printed and does great credit to both author and publisher.—J. Van Tyne.

A MANUAL OF AQUATIC PLANTS. By Norman C. Fassett. McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, 1940: 6 x 9 in., vii + 382 pp., many illustrations. \$4.00.

To date a problem in connection with writings on the utilization and management of waterfowl food plants has been adequate treatment of identification within the space limits practicable in economic publications. That problem may

now be dismissed and readers referred to Dr. Fassett's excellent work which deals primarily with recognition of the plants. Through cooperative effort the book has been copiously illustrated and as the author says "The text is essentially a set of directions for looking at the pictures." The work consists chiefly of keys fully correlated with the illustrations and intended to permit determination of plants even in sterile condition. Generalized descriptions and succinct references to supplementary recent publications on the groups of plants also are given.

The ornithological material is concentrated in a chapter summarizing knowledge on use of the plants by birds and mammals, that is accompanied by an index to the notes by species and other groups, and a bibliography (of 95 items) of the sources of information. Data on fishes is similarly treated. There is a glossary of technical terms and a full index. A much needed and well executed manual.—W. L. McAtee.

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