

## ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

A GUIDE TO BIRD FINDING WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI. By Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr. Oxford University Press, 1953:  $4\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{3}{8}$  in., xxiv + 709 pp., 36 pen-and-ink sketches by George Miksch Sutton. \$6.00.

The Pettingill guides to bird finding are earning a place alongside the Peterson guides to identification as indispensable equipment for the field student in the United States. This volume covers the states west of the Mississippi River (including Minnesota and Louisiana), picking up where the Eastern guide, issued in 1951, left off.

It is truly an ornithological geography of the Western states. Although, first of all, it provides a directory of places to see birds in the wild, it provides also much other information of regional interest—about zoos, museums, bird clubs, and available literature.

This guide is intended primarily to help people traveling to an unfamiliar part of the country, but it is much more than a mere directory. All readers will find useful facts in it, particularly in the introductory portion of the chapter on each state, where there is a discussion of the climate, topography, and plants as they affect the bird life of the region. This information about the Western states is not gathered into any other work to my knowledge. For this alone, the guide will earn a place on many library shelves. There are other items of information that could not easily be found elsewhere. Such an item is that about a 20-acre patch of virgin prairie, never plowed or grazed, near Cherokee, Iowa.

In this work there are many evidences of thoughtful consideration for the problems of the traveler. Localities are discussed under the name of the nearest city or village listed in the Rand McNally road map of the state. Highway directions are given in detail, down to the last unmarked lane. Other suggestions cover overnight accommodations, special clothing needed, and tips on the pronunciation of difficult Spanish and Indian names.

This work is a notable achievement of cooperative effort. It could not have been written from the experience nor even from the reading of one man alone. It is a compendium of the knowledge, much of it previously unpublished, of more than 300 cooperators who are intimately acquainted with their own areas.—HAROLD F. MAYFIELD.

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF BRITAIN AND EUROPE. By Roger Tory Peterson, Guy Mountfort and P. A. D. Hollom. Wm. Collins Sons and Company, London; and Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1954:  $4\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{4}$  in., xxxiv + 318 pp., illustrated by Roger Peterson with 40 color plates, 24 half-tone black-and-white plates, 32 line drawings in the text and 2 end-papers; 368 line distribution maps by P. A. D. Hollom. At time of writing, Swedish, Dutch, German, and Swiss (in French) editions also available. Price of U.S. edition, \$5.00.

This new book confines within the tiny space of some 26 cubic inches the most important published contribution to the advance of European field ornithology since field ornithology assumed its position as a science (and art) in its own right. Mountfort (Secretary of the British Ornithologists' Union) has contributed the main part of the text, Hollom (an editor of *British Birds* and editor of Witherby's *Popular Handbook of British Birds*) the material on geographical distribution and maps, and Peterson the plates and planning, as well as an important part of the text. All three authors have, as this reviewer has witnessed, worked together in a tight collaboration involving ruthless cross-criticism; and the result is nearly perfect.

As the author of a series of field-recognition books the reviewer is well aware how eagerly some critics can hurl themselves upon the details of text and illustrations and make a great show of correcting the proofs at the expense of an appreciation of the book as a whole. In the case of *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* such pedants can make (and have made) a poor showing, pushing Hollom's map-areas a few miles here or there, infrequently modifying Mountfort's choice of field-marks or voice-transliterations, occasionally trying to catch the great Peterson in some slight error or exaggeration in depiction. The bag of such fair game has been incredibly low; for the book is a triumph of accuracy. But, beyond this, it is a triumph of presentation and planning, and performs the service for which it was designed better than the most particular and demanding customer could ever have expected.

The area covered by this book is all Europe west of Long. 30° E. Within this area are found 452 'basic' species, and a little over 100 others that are now extinct or have occurred less than 20 times. This compares interestingly with the 440 species and 74 accidentals in Peterson's Eastern (U.S.) Field Guide; the small extra number of European species are carried by four more color plates. None of the accidentals in the European Field Guide is figured, but no less than 1172 individuals or details of the 452 others are drawn or painted. Peterson has never done his unique type of recognition portraits more beautifully or lucidly; clearly he has learned the European birds so quickly and accurately (in several long seasons in the field) that he has been able to improve, difficult as this may seem, even on the quality of the revised edition of his *A Field Guide to the Birds* (1947).

In general treatment the book follows the plan of the Eastern Field Guide, save that under each species a section on *Habitat* replaces the section on *Range* which is nearly always covered by a map. Dutch, German, Swedish, French and American vernacular names are given. There is a very helpful introductory chapter on 'How to Identify Birds', another on 'The Problem of Subspecies', a personal check-list, a good description of the accidentals, and a well-arranged index. Praise is due Messrs. Collins, at whose Glasgow press the book was printed, and to Messrs. Gilchrist of Leeds, England, who made the color and half-tone blocks, which are specially good; it is no fault of theirs that in a few copies one or two plates may be found to be printed off-register.

It is not often that a bird book can be recommended as a universal 'must'—but such is *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*. The visitor to Europe will be only half a bird-watcher without it. We in Britain know few stay-at-home North Americans, but if there are such persons they can scarcely be wise to overlook a new Peterson Field Guide; and this one covers very many species on the A. O. U. Check-List.

Many must note with wry sympathy the dedication—"to our long-suffering wives."  
JAMES FISHER.

LIFE HISTORIES OF NORTH AMERICAN WOOD WARBLERS. By Arthur Cleveland Bent. U.S. National Museum. Bull. 203. Washington, D.C., 1953: xi + 734 pp., 83 halftone plates. \$4.50

This is the nineteenth in Mr. Bent's series of bulletins dealing with the life histories of North American birds. Since the previous eighteen have been reviewed in ornithological journals throughout the world, a reviewer of the present volume may well wonder what remains to be said.

The wood warblers constitute an exclusively New World family, of exceptional interest to students of evolution and speciation. Almost every habitat, from rain forest to desert,

has its peculiarly-adapted warbler species. Wood warblers breed from the tropics to the arctic. Many a student traces his awakening interest in birds to his first good view of the flashing colors of a warbler.

Like other volumes in the series, this one aims to be complete insofar as our present knowledge allows. Mr. Bent concludes his introduction with this sentence, "If the reader fails to find in these pages anything that he knows about the birds, he can only blame himself for failing to send the information to—*The Author*." Subject to fairly long delays in printing after the manuscript was finished, this perfectionist aim is rather well met. The student who does know facts about wood warblers which do not appear in the present pages is quite likely to find that these things have been learned (or published) since 1945, when Mr. Bent's manuscript was completed.

Since "monumental" has seemed to so many other reviewers the apt adjective for Mr. Bent's work, it should perhaps be repeated in describing this volume. To a bird student who dwells outside New England, however, certain questions are likely to occur, and certain disagreements appear. Although Mr. Bent has utilized the special knowledge of some bird students outside the Northeast, would it not have been better to have assigned to western ornithologists the preparation of appropriate life histories? As in past volumes, the late Dr. Winsor M. Tyler and Dr. A. O. Gross have contributed complete life histories. Edward von S. Dingle, Alexander Sprunt, Jr., and Josselyn Van Tyne, all non-New England bird students, have each contributed two life histories of species concerning which they have special knowledge. Might not the volume have benefited from a wider use of such authors?

It is everlastingly to the credit of New England bird students that they were pioneers in ornithological exploration. Their voluminous, and often charming, writings reduced certain other sections of the country to a state of "ornithological illiteracy." In short, they were too good and too thorough for many of the rest of us. The inevitable result of this, however, is that certain life histories have, for outside readers at least, a kind of New England parochialism. Many warbler species migrate through, and breed in, vast areas outside the Northeast, and it is certainly true that they do not always behave in other areas as they do in New England.

A good number of species, both of northern and southern associations, are peripheral in New England, and thus are likely to exhibit those aberrations of behavior which are common to animals (and plants) in zones of ecological tension. Students familiar with species near the centers of their abundance will often fail to recognize the limitations of behavior which older New England authors place upon them.

There is a very human tendency to place undue emphasis upon the *first* good ornithological writing dealing with any area or any species. Thus, in years gone by when Eastern college students spent summer vacations in the South, they often returned with ornithological information which was entirely new and highly valuable. Now it is quite obvious that a few weeks' residence in an unexplored area did not make these observers "experts" on local bird life, but we have gone on quoting them at great length just as though they were. This is manifestly unfair to resident students who have to their credit many years of observation in a particular area. The explorers continue to be quoted, simply because they were first, while the real local authority is overlooked because he came on the scene later. As history this is good, but it tends to distort the picture of our knowledge of a bird. In many cases we have learned new things; in others the birds themselves have adjusted to new environments.

By this time a good many readers may be ready to dismiss this as the captious comment of a reviewer who must say something after all the complimentary things have been

said. It is not so meant. Our wood warblers are not regional, not national, but international. If New Englanders have done the best writing about them, other sections may only hope that they will in time catch up.—MAURICE BROOKS.

**SHEARWATERS.** By R. M. Lockley. Devin-Adair Company, New York, 1954:238 pages, 20 pages of illustrations. \$4.00.

This is not a new book, but the American edition seems to have appeared more than a decade after its publication in England.

In 1929, when the author and his wife established a residence on the lonely Welsh island of Skokholm, little was known about the life history of the Manx shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*), of which some ten thousand nested on the island's 242 acres. At that date even the incubation period of the species was grossly underestimated in the literature.

The Lockleys settled in the island's ancient farmhouse, ran sheep as a livelihood, and tirelessly studied the shearwaters for twelve years before this book was first issued. They began with simple observations statistically recorded throughout the seasons, next carried out extensive ringing or banding, later conducted homing experiments that have become famous, and, finally, made voyages to the northernmost and southernmost breeding stations of the Manx shearwater. Throughout the work they welcomed and sought collaboration from anyone capable of aiding them. Skokholm even became a memorable port-of-call, in 1934, for participants in the Eighth International Ornithological Congress.

The results of Lockley's work are already familiar to students of oceanic birds from successive reports that he has published in scientific journals. This book is a faithful summary of the findings up to 1942 (the research has continued since), as well as a colorful and charming account of island life and its pageant of weather, vegetation, and a multiplicity of birds and other creatures.

For ornithological field work it would be hard to find a better model of sound methodology than "Shearwaters." Step by step the author describes his procedure and draws inescapable conclusions. There is a minimum of speculation, and Lockley is as scrupulous as Darwin in weighing every alternative hypothesis that might stem from the same evidence. The book establishes the essential pattern of life history not only of its subject species but also of all other Procellariiformes, from storm petrels to albatrosses. Their prolonged breeding seasons, stylized emotional behavior, equal share of labor by the two parents, means of family recognition, lengthy period of growth (125 days from egg to fledgling in the Manx shearwater), the abandonment and subsequent nocturnal flight of the young, the extraordinary extent of the feeding flights, the length of life, and the amazing and still not fully explained homing feats from distant localities, totally unknown to the birds, are set forth here in classic fashion.—ROBERT CUSHMAN MURPHY.

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