

ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

BIRDS OF THE LABRADOR PENINSULA AND ADJACENT AREAS. By W. E. Clyde Todd. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1963: $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ in., xii + 819 pp., 9 col. pls., many photos. and maps. \$18.00.

Though the learned author of this book has made many other notable contributions to ornithological literature, it cannot be doubted that this monumental volume will be regarded in a special way as bringing together the results of his life's major effort. It will not be possible to give serious attention to Labrador birds without taking Todd's publication into account.

In addition to the Labrador peninsula as here defined, the region to which this book relates includes islands adjacent to the peninsula and the entire region east of the Missanabie and Moose Rivers and north of the mainline of the Canadian Pacific Railway as far as Lake Nipissing and thence north of a straight line from that lake to Lake St. John, in the Province of Quebec.

The main theme of the work is concerned with the problems of distribution, general and local, of the Labrador avifauna, but the study and consideration of various included bird species from the taxonomic standpoint form another important part of the book.

The volume is most appropriately dedicated to two men who were intimately associated with the fieldwork which was essential to its production, namely, Paul Commanda, head guide, of North Bay, Ontario, and John B. Semple, a Trustee of the Carnegie Institute, of Sewickley, Pennsylvania.

Prior to the annotated systematic list of species appear a number of limited sections of special interest. These include suitable acknowledgment to the human "angels" whose financial assistance made the field studies possible and to others who assisted in various ways; accounts of the geography and physiography, general geology, climate, population, resources, ecological conditions, and ornithological history of the region; consideration of seasonal occurrence; and sections dealing with the geographic history of the Labrador avifauna and conservation of birdlife. There is also a list of 22 new forms of birds described from the Labrador peninsula, 1789-1950.

Forty-five large pages are devoted to highly interesting records of the 25 Carnegie Museum Expeditions that penetrated various parts of the 600,000 square miles under study, in order to obtain the required information about the birds to be found there. The first expedition took place in 1901, while the concluding one was made in 1958. Seldom has an ornithologist been able to organize and direct research in the region of his choice over so long a period. For many years our author took a leading part in this fieldwork, obtaining essential firsthand acquaintance with the birds and the environment on which his investigations were concentrated and gradually building up a reputation among the residents of the north country until he assumed, in their eyes, the aspect of a legendary figure.

The annotated systematic list which forms the greater part of the work treats of no less than 315 species, of which at least two, probably three, are extinct. Families represented by the largest numbers of species are Anatidae (40 species), Fringillidae (36 species), Scolopacidae (30 species), and Parulidae (25 species).

On reading the lengthy specific accounts, one cannot but be impressed by the excellent and painstaking way in which the author has worked out details of distribution, evaluating the records of an earlier day, pointing out errors of various kinds, and generally setting to rights, with the aid of fresh data, the ranges of the species in the region under consideration. It is not to be expected that ornithologists of a century or more ago would

regard particulars of bird distribution in what was then a vast unexplored region as such data in that region would be regarded today, but scientific accuracy requires that their published reports be evaluated with the utmost care. In the present volume this task, often an unhappy one, has been ably performed.

Taxonomic discussions, often detailed and lengthy, are presented in connection with many species. The author tells us that the opinions expressed on taxonomic problems are his own, and that with them some other ornithologists may not agree. Thus it is not strange to find that in numerous instances the names and systematic arrangements that he believes to be correct, and therefore uses, differ from those used in the 1957 edition of the "A.O.U. Check-List." In this connection it should be mentioned that the author does not hesitate, with respect to various points, to revise, for reasons deemed sufficient, opinions to which he had previously adhered. A few new races are endorsed and others are discredited. In some instances there are differing conclusions as to which forms are species and which are subspecies.

Much new and significant information relating to life histories is incorporated, here and there, in the accounts of various species.

It is interesting to note that the nesting of the Surf Scoter in the Labrador peninsula is satisfactorily established by recorded instances, but it is held that there is no acceptable evidence of the nesting of either the White-winged Scoter or the American Scoter in the region. The present reviewer has no reason to suppose that White-winged Scoters, which summer in large numbers along the coast of the peninsula, breed within its borders, but is inclined to anticipate that American Scoters will eventually be found nesting there. This view with respect to the American Scoters arises from the fact that, on 26 May 1925, and again on 29 May 1935, he saw, in the vicinity of Seven Islands, flocks of whistling American Scoters that seemed to be courting. It is reasonable to think that active courtship at that time of year indicated that nesting grounds were probably not far distant.

This reviewer also dissents from the expressed view that, on the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the Chipping Sparrow "is scarcely more than casual." Though its numbers along that coast are assuredly small, it is believed that, at Natashquan in particular, it is a regular, though scarce, breeding bird.

Readers will appreciate an interesting sidelight on the author's personality that is revealed on page 451. Concerning a Saw-whet Owl, a very rare bird in the Labrador peninsula, that was brought to him alive at Fort George, on the east coast of James Bay, he says, "Although it was the first of the species I had ever seen alive, and although it was high on my list of desiderata, I simply did not have the heart to kill it for a specimen, so I took it out into the woods and let it go."

In addition to full lists of references in the account of each species, a bibliography of 53 pages is provided as an appendix.

Another very useful appendix is a Gazetteer of Localities, containing more than 1,500 entries. The entry which refers to Seven Islands, situated on the north shore, west of the Gulf of St. Lawrence proper, as a village serves to draw attention to the rapidly changing conditions in parts of the region covered by this work. In the past 15 years Seven Islands has grown from a village to a city of some 25,000 inhabitants.

An index to families and names of birds concludes this notable volume.

It is a cause for general rejoicing that the author was able, not only to complete the long-continued researches that he describes, but also to prepare this exceptional report thereon and to see it, through publication, become available to all.—HARRISON F. LEWIS.

THE BIRDS OF COLOMBIA AND ADJACENT AREAS OF SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA. By R. Meyer de Schauensee. Livingston Publishing Company, Narberth, Pennsylvania, 1964: $6\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{1}{4}$ in., xvi + 427 pp., 20 pls. (12 col.) by E. L. Poole, 88 line drawings by G. M. Sutton; endpaper maps. \$10.00.

This book marks an important step in the development of Neotropical ornithology, for it is the first popular guide, written in English, for any region in continental South America. It will doubtless be a great stimulus to amateur ornithologists, particularly short-term visitors who heretofore were intrigued by the abundance of species but, by the same token, were bewildered because there was no convenient method by which they could be identified. Because Colombia has an immense avifauna, encompassing nearly 60 per cent of all species occurring in South America, this volume will be of value throughout the northern part of the continent.

The introduction to the volume briefly summarizes the history of ornithological studies in Colombia and describes the geography, the seven faunal regions, and the four altitudinal zones of the country.

In the body of the book, each family is prefaced by an account of its world distribution, its habitat preferences and behavioral characteristics, a generalized description of its nests and eggs, and the total number of species found in Colombia, in the New World, and throughout the world. A drawing of a typical Colombian member of the family heads the section. This introductory summary is followed by an elimination key entitled "Aid to Identification," in which the Colombian species are divided into several broadly characterized morphological groups, such as "Underparts uniform gray, black, or white; Underparts uniform or mostly uniform buff to chestnut"; etc. Each group is followed by a series of numbers which refer to the positions of the species as they are arranged in the text. Although omitting the names of the birds makes for brevity, it causes the use of the keys to become a tedious, frustrating game. One has no hint of which species are included in a given group until they are tracked down in the text.

For each species an English vernacular name is employed, chosen with the aid of Eugene Eisenmann, who has long been interested in the standardization of vernaculars, and this is followed by the scientific name. Under "Description" is given the length of the bird in inches and a rather detailed description of the species, obviously taken from museum specimens rather than based on the characters one is most likely to see in the field. Next is outlined the total range of the species and its distribution within Colombia, including a broad indication of its habitat (e.g., "forest"). If there is more than one race in the country these are named, their distribution is noted, and any obvious morphological distinctions are described. In all 1,556 species are treated and 2,640 subspecies are cited, some in detail.

An English-Spanish glossary precedes a chronological list of important publications on Colombia. An index to scientific and vernacular names concludes the volume.

Twenty plates, 12 of which are in color, depicting 259 species and 87 line drawings of a representative member of each family, illustrate the book. The plates, by Poole, are meticulously prepared. The birds are portrayed in careful, crisp detail rather than in the generalized "identification" style of the familiar Peterson guides. The frontispiece, illustrating some of the small, brilliantly colored, tanagers, is inferior. The colors are muted and the details fuzzy. The drawings, by Sutton, are excellent; many have been taken from Van Tyne and Berger's "Fundamentals of Ornithology" (1959).

With a pioneering work of such broad scope as this, one must avoid comparisons with works written about better-known avifaunas. Nevertheless, there are certain features of this volume which seem less than satisfactory. A notable inconvenience is the failure

to provide a list of the families in the table of contents. In order to locate a given family one must wade through the lengthy index. Another deficiency concerns the use of names. Opposite each plate is a page on which the species are identified; the vernacular names are in large boldface, the scientific names in small italics. Unfortunately, the generic names are abbreviated to a single letter. If the species is polytypic, the specific name is also represented by only a single letter while the subspecific name is spelled in full. If one is not familiar with the vernaculars, which is almost certainly true if one speaks no English and probably is generally true of those English speakers without a prior interest in South American birds, the subspecific name is of little assistance. Even an ornithologist would probably be hard put to recall that *X. p. rostratus* and *X. p. picirostris*, both of which appear on the same page, stand for *Xiphocolaptes promeropirhynchus rostratus* and *Xiphorhynchus picus picirostris*, respectively. All mention of subspecies, unless morphologically very distinct, would seem better omitted from a book which is designed to assist identification rather than serve as a checklist.

Another disappointment is the complete lack of reference to song, behavior, and precise habitat preference. While it is granted that such information is unknown for many species, there are data for a substantial proportion of the avifauna, perhaps not specifically for Colombian forms but for birds which range into other areas of South America and into Central America. For example, the forest-inhabiting, melodious-voiced wren *Henicorhina leucosticta* may not have been closely observed in Colombia, but it is reasonably well known in Mexico and Central America and doubtless has similar habits in Colombia.

In summary, one has the impression that this guide is in reality a checklist of Colombian birds upon which has been superimposed descriptions of museum specimens. It is a useful book, although not easily used, but even without further ornithological work in Colombia could have been improved in many ways.—RAYMOND A. PAYNTER, JR.

BIRD SONGS FROM THE TROPICS: The Voices of 40 Tropical American Birds Recorded in the Field and Forests, Lowlands and Highlands of Venezuela. Recording, production, and narration by Paul Schwartz. Produced by the Instituto Neotropical, Caracas, Venezuela, 1964: 12-inch high-fidelity record, 2 sides, 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm, jacket with table of contents. \$7.75. (Order from the Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York).

Paul Schwartz presents, in this record, a wide variety of songs and calls of Venezuelan birds, all well recorded, with a minimum of extraneous sounds, and discerningly selected for maximum interest. This is a record which may be equally enjoyed as sheer entertainment, as an informal abstract of the subject of the sounds produced by tropical birds, or as a precise technical production.

The record includes 40 species of 8 orders and 22 families and presents high-pitched songs and low-pitched songs, extremely complex songs and simple songs, some well-known sounds and some poorly known sounds, some nocturnal species as well as diurnal species.

It is a record which unobtrusively informs the listener in many ways, even while holding his attention by its interesting content. Schwartz himself announces the common name of each species in turn, and calls attention succinctly, yet not pedantically, to many of the informative aspects of the record. These include a sampling of the wide variety of songs within a single family, the Troglodytidae (climaxed by the strikingly beautiful song of the Musician Wren), a comparison of the rather similar performances of two antshrikes (Barred Antshrike and Great Antshrike), an indication of the variety of songs to be found in populations of one species (Rufous-collared Sparrow) in different

parts of Venezuela, a sample of the "dawn songs" of a flycatcher (Great Kiskadee), and some examples of "duets" in tropical wrens and fringillids. Schwartz has presented a sequence of a wren "duet" as one might hear it from a moderate distance, when it seems to be a performance by a single bird, and then has followed this with a sequence in which the microphone has been cleverly placed in such a way that the relative loudnesses of the two parts of the song indicate clearly that it is a precisely timed, antiphonal song by two individuals. The listener may also learn that some tropical hummingbirds give well-developed vocal performances, that a Rufous-bellied Anthrush can deliver a series of rather loud, musical notes at a rate of four or five per second for 45 seconds without a pause, that the calls of some tropical caprimulgids are very high pitched, while others more nearly resemble the calls of the nightjars of the United States.

Six of the species, the Short-billed Marsh Wren, the House Wren (if the tropical forms are not separated as a distinct species), the Pauraque, the Great Kiskadee, the Green Jay, and the White-tipped Dove, range all the way to the United States, and at least 12 others range as far north as Mexico, so that most listeners will not be moving into a completely strange environment. Thus almost all of us will have the pleasure of comparing some of the performances with what we remember of the same species outside of Venezuela.

The high-pitched songs of the Blue-backed Conebill and the Blue-gray Tanager come through surprisingly well as do the shrill notes of the hummingbirds. The loudness level of the bird sounds and of the commentary is reasonably well balanced so that there is little necessity for changing the volume controls, although this may vary with the individual listener's sensitivity to various frequencies.

With only 20 species on each side, the listener has a chance to dwell upon the recordings of each species in turn and to get some idea of the variations and different types of performances by the same species. The birds are not arranged in taxonomic order, nor is there any obvious rigid arrangement of species, such as by habitat or type of call or song, except that all of the regular night birds are placed together. The result is a pleasing variety of sounds. The recordings are grouped into five bands on each side, for ready reference, with from two to six species included in each band. The jacket lists each species in order by common name and scientific name under side number and band number.

The record is obviously not intended as a complete field guide to the bird songs of Venezuela, but it could help the listener to learn some of the more common species of the New World tropics. In the case of the potoo, the owls, the nightjars, and the Little Tinamou, which are so difficult to see as they call, it presents recordings of very widely distributed species, and thus can be a great aid in identification of these birds in the field in many countries.

Among the highlights not already mentioned are the surprising vocal performances of the Laughing Falcon, the Lance-tailed Manakin, and the Black-winged Bellbird.

This is a welcome addition to the list of high-quality published recordings of bird songs from outside of the United States.—ERNEST P. EDWARDS.

NAMING THE BIRDS AT A GLANCE. By Lou Blachly and Randolph Jenks. Guide drawings by Sheridan Oman. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1963: $4\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ in., xvii + 331 pp. \$3.95.

The enormous success of Roger Tory Peterson's field guides must surely stand as a constant temptation and challenge to other authors: Is there a better system? One criticism of any field guide which follows a strict systematic order is the difficulty the

beginner has in quickly finding the right family, much less the right species. An imaginative and successful alternative was demonstrated by Fitter and Richardson in 1952, with their Collins Pocket Guide to British Birds, in which identification was aided by groupings according to size, color, distinctive features, behavior, habitat, etc. Now two Americans have developed a system designed to aid the beginner with birds classified according to "whatever you notice at first sight," the field marks that might catch the eye in a quick or distant glimpse.

Let us state at the outset that the authors have demonstrated their point. It is indeed possible to use this guide as promised, quickly to identify birds in the field from the fleeting glance and the salient feature. In a cleverly devised series of keys, one is quickly referred to the section that might pertain: black head; blue, with wing bars; tail chestnut or rufous; red underparts; etc. From there it becomes a simple matter to narrow down the choices to the obvious answer. But there is one fatal flaw.

We are told on the title page that this is a pocket guide to the eastern land birds from South Carolina west to the Rocky Mountains and north to the Arctic. Which surely it is not. What it is, with certain extensions, is a guide to the identification of the *male birds of most of the landbird species in this area, in spring*. In their introduction, the authors state that "rare, unusual, and immature birds and birds in changed fall and winter plumage are not included." Not included also are pictures or identification keys to females, not even for strikingly dimorphic species. Thus the system rules out about 75 per cent of all the individuals the bird watcher will see throughout the year! And obviously any system that singles out the easy 25 per cent and ignores the rest simply does not work. The fact that this system takes 321 pages to treat 214 species would suggest that, to cover all the species and all the plumages in Peterson's Eastern Guide, three books this size would be required. The prodigality of space demanded is evident. To treat many species, the same illustration and description must be repeated three or four times in different sections. For example, one finds identical treatments of the Red-breasted Nuthatch on page 5 (Cap Black), page 65 (No Wing Bars), page 103 (Underparts Solid Chestnut or Brown), and page 137 (Black Eye Stripe or Mask). Meanwhile, if the first bird one spots after buying this guide happens to be a female Indigo Bunting, one might search all morning before discovering the cryptic, useless description "generally brownish and spotted below." But alas, so many individual birds have *no* field mark diagnostic at a glance that, beyond the birds treated here, the system becomes unworkable. Warblers in autumn and other such "problem birds" are simply ignored.

Other failings include very sketchy or totally absent habitat notes, some key identification marks missed (as in the House Finch), size wrong (Tree Sparrow), prevalent plumage not shown (winter Lapland Longspur), voice wrong (Fish Crow), birds missing from key group (Blue-winged Warbler not included in "Underparts Clear Bright Yellow"), and several frequently seen species missing altogether (Western Kingbird, Swainson's Warbler, Brewer's Blackbird, Clay-colored Sparrow).

On the plus side are the handsome and very much alive pen-and-ink drawings of Sheridan Oman, the sections on ground birds, owls, and hawks with views of birds perched and in flight. In summation, while this is not the answer to Peterson, it can be a helpful though tantalizing introduction for the complete neophyte—in perhaps his first spring migration. After that, he is going to demand information about family and generic relationships, about female, immature, and autumn plumages, and far more information on habitat, habits, and other attributes that help in identification, beyond that first quick glance.—ROBERT S. ARBIB, JR.

ULENDO. By Archie Carr. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1964: $5\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ in., xviii + v [index] pp., map, photos. \$5.95.

There are eight chapters in this book, and only one of these deals to any significant extent with birds. It might thus seem somewhat marginal as the subject for a review in an ornithological journal. But any reader of *The Wilson Bulletin*, or anyone interested in conservation, in Africa, or in the finest natural history writing extant, will be the poorer if he fails to read Archie Carr's new book.

It purports to be a travel book, based chiefly on the author's experiences in Africa (*Uleno* means "journey" in one of the languages spoken in Nyasaland), but it is far more than that. Dr. Carr is an unashamed follower of sidetracks. His book is filled, as a pudding with raisins, with delightful little essays peripheral to his main topics. Some music heard in Nyasaland, for example, stimulates a five-page discussion of the marimba, in both its African and its Central American manifestations. A net haul in Lake Nyasa, with its yield of many closely related species of cichlid fishes, leads into a commonsense discussion of speciation and adaptation. And Carr's entire bird chapter follows from his having watched a Florida Snowy Egret following a dragline to glean food from the spilled mud. He embarks on a most thought-provoking speculation on the origin of the cattle-following habit in egrets—but not without getting sidetracked into writing about the soaring of vultures, the use of tools by animals, and native methods of hunting the hippopotamus.

Although the general tone of the book is light, there are also serious treatments of important conservation problems, especially the future of African wildlife in the context of the human "population explosion" and of African nationalism.

All too seldom does a publisher's blurb on the dust jacket of a book bear a one-to-one relationship to the truth. However, of Archie Carr the publisher writes "his literary gifts equal his scientific gifts." Dr. Carr, who is on the faculty of the University of Florida, is a herpetologist, and I am not qualified to assess his professional capability. But if his *scientific* gifts equal his *literary* gifts, then Archie Carr must indeed be one of the country's most outstanding herpetologists. Don't miss this book!—KENNETH C. PARKES.