

first recorded nest was found at Regina in 1934. The writer discovered a nest containing five eggs on June 17, 1940, and the species is now one of our regular breeding birds.

Passerella iliaca FOX SPARROW

The writer has seen a Fox Sparrow once

only, on Sept. 29, 1941. Another was reported seen during a severe snow storm on September 22, 1934. This sparrow is said to be a very fleeting migrant, and this point is probably not within the regular limits of its migration route.

BOOK REVIEW

THE BIRDS OF BRITAIN by James Fisher, 80v; 48 pp., 12 color plates, 26 black and white illustr., 1942. London and Glasgow: William Collins Sons and Co. Ltd. Price 3s. 6d.

This is one of the Britain in Pictures series, of which some thirty volumes have appeared. One of the striking things about this book is that it was produced in Great Britain in the war year of 1942. The reason appears toward the end of the volume where the author says that the section of the British public with a recreational interest in birds is large, possibly numbering over a million people, and is increasing, and he asks "Who shall stop the British at their honest play?".

This is a background study, a summary of the country, its birds, their students and the present, past and future of both birds and students. An interesting feature is that estimates of the numbers of individuals of some species are given. On Britain's 57 million acres each year some 120 million land birds nest. Of the 424 species of birds recorded in Britain about 200 are "perhaps the most written of, the most poeticised, the most sung of, dreamed of, listened to, observed, protected, loved, birds in the world". Moors and heath may have a population of one bird to two acres; gardens as many as ten to the acre. The small fields, with their hedgerows help support a large bird population.

The bird life is contrasted with that of the continent; migration and banding is touched on. In 1890, in order to study movements of woodcock, young were banded in Northumberland.

The history of the birds, with their habitats, marching northward across Britain following the retreating ice, is sketched since the ice age 15,000 years ago, through a pine wood age, and an oak wood age, to the present agricultural age. Relics of an earlier, more northern fauna, such as Ptarmigan and

Snow Buntings, persist as relics. The present day agriculture age birds are drawn largely from the oak woods. The Chaffinch and the Blackbird are the most abundant land birds, numbering about ten million each in England and Wales. Probably all of Britain has been changed by man and over half of it is now tilled. Water and marsh species have suffered particularly in this change. Introduction of firearms caused a decrease in birds of prey, and game management an increase in game birds. Collectors have helped to decimate some of the rare species and protection has saved some from disappearing. Changes are occurring independently of man; as the increase of the Fulmar and Gannet, and the invasion of the Black Redstart.

Turner wrote the first original and scientific treatise in 1544 and through a long line of outstanding names such as Ray, Willoughby, White, Pennant, Yarrow and Newton, the work has culminated in the present magnificent Handbook of British Birds that is perhaps the best local work extant.

The growth of public interest in natural history has increased since the last war, and is increasing during this.

The academic phase of description and enumeration being completed, Fisher believes the future will have much organized birdwatching, with national centres for correlating results and that the country natural history societies will be revived.

The illustrations, ranging in date from 1652, by such artists as Gould, Wolf, Lodge, Thorburn, Millais, Audubon, Albin, Donovan, Keulemans and Neale are very attractive and make us realize how good were some of the earlier bird plates.

The book ends with an enumeration of birds recorded up to 1941, classified into lists according to their type of occurrence.

It is a pleasing, interesting summary and to be recommended as a survey of bird life in Britain for the general reader. A. L. RAND.



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