

ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

A NATURALIST IN CUBA. By Thomas Barbour. Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1945: $5\frac{1}{2} \times 8$ in., x + 317 pp., 16 pls. \$3.00.

Probably no American is better qualified than Thomas Barbour to write about Cuba. His more than thirty trips to Cuba in the past thirty-six years have taken him to even the most remote parts of that beautiful island. His devouring curiosity and his encyclopedic knowledge of all fields of biology have enabled him to profit fully from his great opportunity. The result is a book worthy of a place on our shelves with the classic "naturalist" volumes of Bates and Belt.

The two chapters devoted to birds will not only provide a delightful introduction to Cuban birds for many beginners, but they will also furnish more advanced students with much valuable data on the habits and the status, past and present, of Cuban birds. Unfortunately, scientific names are largely omitted from the bird chapters (although they are invariably used in full in the chapter on bats, which follows), and even the vernacular names are in some cases hardly adequate for identifying the species being discussed without recourse to the author's "Cuban Ornithology" (1943)—from which, indeed, a number of the bird accounts are copied in full. Following the modern trend, the publishers have removed the capital letters from the proper names of birds in most cases (forgetting to do so in the case of the Caracara and the Jacana) and have thus provided further difficulties for the reader. In certain examples, these two practices result in passages which will surely be confusing to some readers. On page 132 we find ourselves reading about "little yellow rails." I am afraid that few readers will instantly realize that Barbour is talking about *Porzana flaviventer*, the little neotropical rail related to our Sora, and not *Coturnicops noveboracensis*, the Yellow Rail of all North American bird books. A possible third complication in the field of vernacular nomenclature results from Barbour's sometimes following that curious custom which we ornithologists have of using two or more vernacular names for a single species. We head our account "Bob-white" and then write entirely about "quail"; or we list the "Osprey" and then discuss the "Fish Hawk."

The additional chapters of especial interest to the naturalist deal with reptiles and amphibians, mammals, cave hunting (which here means hunting *in* caves), and the Soledad garden. Six other chapters (one of them called an appendix), describing and interpreting the island and its people, complete an absorbingly interesting book on Cuba as seen by a great naturalist.—J. Van Tyne.

BIRDS OF KENTUCKY. By Jesse Dade Figgins. University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, Kentucky, 1945: $6\frac{1}{2} \times 9\frac{5}{8}$ in., 366 pp., 9 pls., 2 figs., 1 map. \$2.50.

This dull, poorly illustrated, thoroughly disheartening book was published under a grant from the Haggin memorial trust fund. Since it obviously was not designed to rouse popular interest (the only bird picture in it is a Goshawk drawing by Fuertes, used without giving credit, and forced into service as a diagram to show a bird's topography), we naturally expect it to be an authoritative reference work to which we can turn for concise information concerning bird-life *in Kentucky*. What we find instead is a mass of carelessly chosen general information about species which may or may not have been recorded from Kentucky; sketchy, often inaccurate, descriptions of these birds; and discursive, futile comments as to the subspecies known or thought to occur within the boundaries of the State. Stumbling page by page through the book in our vain search for migration dates; for maps showing the distribution of such species as the Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Black-capped Chickadee, and Carolina Chickadee, which are known to be represented by more than one race; for occasional reference to specimens in the principal bird collections made within the State, or for evidence that



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