

REVIEWS

EXPLORING THE ANIMAL WORLD by Charles Elton. George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1933. 3s. 6d.

Those who know Elton's *Animal Ecology* will want to read this little volume, based on a series of radio talks. The aim of the talks apparently was to awaken interest in observing animals. The subjects dealt with are how to look for animals, woodland life, animal life at night, nature sanctuaries and plagues of animals. Naturally, the animals dealt with are those of the English countryside, the mammals, birds, ants, bees, spiders, etc., but as most of the ones mentioned have their Canadian counterparts, the accounts have nearly or quite as much interest and charm for the Canadian reader as for those for whom they were originally prepared. The book should be read by everyone interested in the new natural history of which Elton is one of the leading exponents.—J. R. D.

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS. *Giving field marks of all species found in Eastern North America. Text and Illustrations in colour and in black and white.* By Roger Tory Peterson. Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1934. Price. \$2.75.

A book that the amateur bird observer has long been looking for and which the most seasoned ornithologist will find of value. Presented as "a bird-book on a new plan" it is the culmination of a movement in popular bird literature, that has been for some time in progress, whereby bird study has been stripped of its technicalities and with no loss of real accuracy, the meat offered to the general public without a shell of scientific verbiage and pedantry. It seems difficult to see how, within its class, it could be improved upon. It is a very practical working manual of field-marks, ignoring confusing detail and concentrating on the salient characters by which one bird can be distinguished from another under ordinary field conditions. It is not for the closet naturalist identifying birds in the hand who has other literature for the purpose; but, for the field worker who depends on eyes and glasses for

the recognition of species, it will be invaluable. For this purpose it is far and away the best that we have seen.

The descriptions of individual species are broadly generalized, the essentials are presented as they appear in life, and are easily visualized from the written word. The details of distinction are admirably chosen and models of conciseness. The reviewer has essayed considerably along these lines and can vouch for the difficulty as well as the success of this accomplishment. He has searched the volume with a rather critical and somewhat experienced eye and has found little to object to and much to admire. His difficulty is to keep his enthusiasm within judicial bounds.

The ample illustrations are naturally an important feature of the work. Nearly every species is illustrated either in black and white or in colour. A few of the former are pen and inks but most are wash-drawings in half-tone. They are not naturalistic representations, but are more or less conventionalized or diagrammatic, with confusing details omitted, to show the bird as it appears to the eye in the field with the critical distinctive points emphasised. The drawings are remarkable for their clear definiteness. The author-artist shows not only competent draughtsmanship and command of his art-media but knowledge and feeling for his subjects. In many cases in these simplified sketches he has caught the spirit as well as the outline and pattern of the various species. Many birds in juxtaposition are shown in identical attitude, a proceeding that may not satisfy artistic yearnings but is of practical assistance to direct comparison. Particularly should be mentioned the coloured plates of sparrows and warblers; these birds are shown of small size but with a sharpness of detail that is unusual in four-colour half-tone work. For these the plate maker and the printer should be commended.

It is a light, compact little volume in waterproof leatherette binding to stand the weather and fits nicely into the side coat pocket, just the form, size and substance to accompany one on a walk in a birdy neighbourhood. We highly recommend it and anticipate a great success for it.—P.A.T.



Taverner, P. A. 1935. "A Field Guide to the Birds, by Roger Tory Peterson [Review]." *The Canadian field-naturalist* 49(3), 62–62.

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