

reasons the proceedings of this meeting indicate that much is still left to consider and discuss.

The book has two appendices, one containing a selected bibliography with 89 entries on the topic of the meeting, and the other giving returns from questionnaires sent across Canada to 500 institutions housing biological collections. From the latter there

were 147 replies, each one showing a desire to meet periodically to learn from others doing similar work. So when is the next meeting?

YORKE EDWARDS

663 Radcliffe Lane, Victoria, B.C., V8S 5B8

### **Dear Lord Rothschild: Birds, Butterflies, and History**

By Miriam Rothschild. 1983. ISI Press, Philadelphia. xxiv + 398 pp., illus. U.S. \$29.95 in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico; U.S. \$32.95 elsewhere.

This is a gracefully written book about an engaging and unusual member of the famous Rothschild family, who made his mark not in the field of finance, but as a natural historian of considerable distinction. In the forty-odd years from 1889 until the early 1930s, the world's largest private collection of zoological specimens was created and maintained in the village of Tring, England, some 25 miles northwest of London, by the brilliant and eccentric Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild (1868-1937). Lord Rothschild was a very private, shy and reticent person, whose only close friend appears to have been his fond mother, though he had a number of professional colleagues. A serious speech impediment made any extensive public speaking impossible. He was, the author tells us, both creative and childish, a man of massive contradictions, yet exceptionally able and devoted to his collections. These ultimately consisted of nearly three million specimens, mainly lepidoptera and beetles, though nearly ten percent of this total was bird skins. The decision to sell the bird specimens toward the end of his life created something of an international furore in zoological circles.

Early in his collecting career, Rothschild persuaded two exponents of what later became known as the new systematics, Ernst Hartert, then one of the world's leading ornithologists, and Karl Jordan, an equally eminent entomologist, to direct the research efforts at Tring. They in turn provided a high calibre of guidance for a number of younger colleagues who were generally eager to work from time to time in the yeasty atmosphere of disciplined scholarly effort at Rothschild's Museum. Colleagues later marvelled at how much Hartert, Jordan and others associated with Tring were able to accomplish, given the Museum's meager annual budget of several thousand pounds.

Rothschild's finances were always complex. Admittedly poor at managing money, he relied upon his parents and his younger brother Charles for guidance in this area and, following his brother's

untimely death, upon the latter's very capable widow. Both Hartert and Jordan accepted much less in salary than they could have expected to receive elsewhere. However, the expeditions mounted to various parts of the world under their leadership were well managed and productive of important discoveries in zoology. The outstanding series of publications produced by Hartert, Jordan and their colleagues at Tring over four decades provided an unusually high standard in those fields of zoological research in which Rothschild was particularly interested.

Rothschild was involved in many other activities during his lifetime in addition to "My Museum," as he termed it. He served for several years as a Member of Parliament, and was involved in some of the early negotiations which would ultimately result in the creation of the State of Israel. On a sadder note, for forty years he permitted himself to be blackmailed by a charming, witty, aristocratic, but ruthless peeress who at one time had been his mistress. Aided and abetted by her husband, she ruined him financially, destroyed his peace of mind for four decades, and eventually forced him to sell his invaluable collection of birds. Rothschild evidently permitted himself to be placed in this position until after the death of his formidable mother early in 1935 because he feared her reaction if the old relationship were made public. It was only after his mother's passing that he realized he could ignore his tormentors. By this time, however, the great majority of his marvellous bird specimens, numbering nearly a quarter of a million, had been sold for little more than a dollar apiece to the American Museum of Natural History in New York, bringing that institution's collection to a position of international primacy.

The author, herself a distinguished entomologist and niece of Lord Walter's, does not hide her uncle's often bizarre behavior. Mail which he did not wish to read, for example, was often tossed into convenient laundry baskets, and on one occasion, his younger brother Charles was compelled to bring four clerks to Tring who spent a week sorting out a two year accumulation. Although Lord Walter, in common



with his father and many other Rothschilds, ordered the destruction of many of his personal papers when he died, most of those sent to him by the blackmailing peeress were left to be discovered by his shocked sister-in-law after he was gone.

Walter Rothschild was not alone in making contributions to the natural sciences. His brother Charles was an able entomologist whose untimely death at the age of 46 virtually brought progress in nature conservation in the United Kingdom to a halt for a quarter of a century. With his passing in 1923, Walter was dependent upon his mother, then nearly 80, who with a staff of 14 ran the household, while Charles' sad but energetic widow, Rozsika, had charge of the farms and gardens at Tring. This meant that Rozsika handled the finances for Walter's museum. Fortunately, she was generally supportive of

his work, though she had no particular understanding of it. When asked on one occasion to sum up his accomplishments in zoology, she simply described him as a splitter. At his death, his remaining collections passed to the British Museum.

Doctor Rothschild's book is not only an ably written account of her uncle's career, but of the curators, collectors and other personalities who were associated with him in the work of his museum and other enterprises. It is also recommended as an enjoyable reading experience.

KEIR B. STERLING

U.S. Army Ordnance Center and School, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland 21005

### **The Trumpeter: Voices from the Canadian Ecophilosophy Network**

Edited by Alan R. Drengson. Published by LightStar, 1138 Richardson Street, Victoria, B.C. V8V 3C8. 1985 membership \$5.00, complete set of past newsletters \$5.50 postpaid. Published quarterly.

This delightful and holistically ecological newsletter combines carefully thought-out ecological philosophy, poetry and illustrations in a very readable and enlightening style. The last issue contained 24 pages with slightly reduced double-columned, easy-to-read typed script (letter quality, microcomputer output?).

Newsletter goals stated in the second issue included forming "a network of persons who feel that preserving the integrity of the Earth's ecosystems requires reflections on ends, values and priorities. Environmental philosophy includes both theoretic and normative areas related to environmental policy. People in all disciplines contribute to environmental philosophy. When environmental philosophy is pursued as a practical activity which aims to understand and attune self and community to nature it becomes ecophilosophy." The writing is not dry!

A sampling of topics dealt with will give a more concrete idea of its contents: Towards a revisioning of reality; Plant symbiosis: a deeper ecology; Toward a sustainable agriculture; Ecopoetry, including Zenhaiku of Basho; Seeds of disaster (about commercialization of the farm seed industry and reduction in genetic diversity); Film and book reviews. The articles are a richly woven blend of knowledge and a pleasure to read.

After reading samples of issues lent by a neighbour I sent for a subscription and for the back issues. And I plan to give subscriptions for presents. I warmly suggest that you try a trial subscription. The blowing dandelion seed theme page and article end decos by Jenus Anderson Friesen and others by the editor are a delight.

DON E. MCALLISTER

Ichthyology Section, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0M8

### **How to Edit a Scientific Journal**

By Claude T. Bishop. 1984. ISI Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. xii + 138 pp., illus. U.S. \$14.95.

Pick up this book and flip to page 44. Here is the classic editorial cartoon of all time, reproduced from the *American Scientist* (1978). It depicts a blackboard covered with awesome formulae through which a lab-

coated academic is completing an "X" while his startled colleague questions: "That's *it*? That's peer review?"

This epic, and others as aptly chosen, is embedded in a text divided into nine chapters: The Literature of Science, Editors, Editorial Boards, The Review Process, Referees, Ethics, Keeping Track, Copy





Sterling, Keir B. 1986. "Dear Lord Rothschild: Birds, Butterflies, and History, by Miriam Rothschild [Review]." *The Canadian field-naturalist* 100(3), 454–455.  
<https://doi.org/10.5962/p.355690>.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/89211>

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.355690>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/355690>

#### **Holding Institution**

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

#### **Sponsored by**

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

#### **Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

Rights Holder: Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

Rights: <https://biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.