

## RECENT LITERATURE.

**Van Oort's 'Birds of Holland.'**<sup>1</sup>— A year ago we had the pleasure of noticing the appearance of parts 1 and 2 of this important work. We are now in receipt of parts 3 and 4 which, however, were issued in May last. These fully maintain the high standard set by the first parts and both plates and letter press are excellent.

The plan of the work was fully set forth in our previous notice so that it is not necessary to repeat it here. The present instalments complete the Cormorants, cover all of the Ardeiformes, the Flamingo and the Swans. The twenty plates, 10 $\frac{3}{4}$  by 14 inches are admirably colored and represent the principal variations in plumage to be found in each species. As might be expected the subjects lend themselves to more artistic treatment than those of parts 1 and 2 and many of them are a distinct improvement in this respect. The text runs from page 57 to 120 and is beautifully printed and typographical errors seem to be rare. An errata page is included in this fasciculus calling attention to the presence of parentheses about the names of authors in a number of cases where they should have been omitted — the result of an effort for uniformity on the part of the printer or proof-reader which is the despair of editors in America as well as in Holland! We trust that Dr. Van Oort may be enabled to proceed rapidly with the remaining parts of his great work.— W. S.

**Taverner's 'Birds of Eastern Canada.'**<sup>2</sup>— This notable work has been prepared to meet a growing demand for a handbook that will present in concise form the more important information on the habits and distribution of the birds of East Canada and keys and descriptions that will enable one to identify them. In providing for all these needs we think that the author has been remarkably successful.

The key carries one as a rule only to the familus but the numerous figures with which it is supplied illustrate the heads of several of the most striking species in each. In large families like the Warblers and Finches, however, the reader must work from the several descriptions without any key to guide him. The descriptions are usually divided into two sections entitled "Distinctions" and "Field marks" and there are two others "Nesting" and "Distribution." There is also a paragraph headed "Subspecies" in which the geographic races are briefly mentioned after which comes a

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<sup>1</sup> Ornithologia Neerlandica. De Vogels van Nederland door Dr. E. D. Van Oort. Directeur van's Rijks Museum van Natuurlijke Historie te Leiden. Met ongeveer vierhonderd gekleurd platen. Martinus Nijhoff. Lange Voorhout 9, The Hague, Holland. Aflevering 3 and 4.

<sup>2</sup> Birds of Eastern Canada. By P. A. Taverner. Memoir 104, No. 3, Biological Series. Canadian Geological Survey. Ottawa, 1919. pp. 1-297, figs. 1-68, colored plates I-L. Price 50 cts.



general account of habits and "economic status." The English name of the A. O. U. 'Check-List' is given at the head of the section relating to each species followed by other vernacular names current in the region covered by the work including the French name, and finally the *binomial* Latin name of the 'Check-List.'

The general information presented under the various species is as a rule well selected and covers most of the questions that arise in the minds of bird students seeking information. In the case of the Purple Finch we notice a not unnatural criticism of the name purple as applied to this species which, as Mr. Taverner says, is more of a magenta. Dr. Spencer Trotter however, ('Auk,' 1912, p. 255) has called attention to the fact that it was the famous Tyrian purple after which the bird was named not the violet purple of today. The colored plates by Mr. Frank C. Hennessey are very attractive and the postures of the birds usually good, some of them like the Kinglets rather daring in their originality. Mr. Hennessey evidently studies his birds and his paintings are his own interpretation of what he sees rather than copies of conventional attitudes. We need just such effort in ornithological illustration.

Having given our hearty approval of Mr. Taverner's book so far as the general reader, is concerned which, after all, is the main point in its production, we must take exception to his attitude on some minor or more technical points.

As is well known, he is opposed to the use of subspecies and his effort to dispense with them in his nomenclature and at the same time explain them in a sort of foot note has not been very happy. The non-technical reader, who may be interested in Pine Grosbeaks, for instance, is almost certain to regard the Pine Grosbeak, *Pinicola enucleator*, which heads the paragraph as a different bird from the Canadian Pine Grosbeak, *P. e. leucura*, mentioned in small type at the end. This matter, however, has been thoroughly discussed elsewhere ('Auk,' 1918, pp. 446-449). In this connection Mr. Taverner constantly makes use of an unfortunate term "type form" when referring the first described race in a group of con-specific forms. This race is of exactly the same rank as any of the others, and this term, the use of which we hoped had died out, is distinctly misleading. The word type, it seems to us had better be restricted to the specimen which was originally described and it remains the same whether the form which it represents becomes a species or a subspecies. Some authors, as Mr. Gregory M. Mathews cite subspecies (i. e. trinomial names) as types of genera and these may or may not happen to be what Mr. Taverner calls the "type form," thus is the matter further complicated.

Another unfortunate feature of this work is the practice of interpolating generic or group headings at various points throughout the book while adjacent genera or groups are not accorded such distinction. For instance, there is a heading on page 83, "White Herons" and under it we find not only the Egret and the Little Blue Heron but the Green and Black-crowned Night Herons as well. We are supposed to include only the first two but



there is nothing to indicate this to the uninitiated. Whoever prepared the systematic index on pages 29 to 39 completely misunderstood this arrangement just as we supposed a general reader would do. The heading "Genus *Acanthis*," which was intended to include only the Redpolls but which is followed by all the other Fringillidæ without a break has been carried on to the following page of the index by whoever prepared it as "Genus *Acanthis* concluded" under which we find the Swamp Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, etc.!

While the general text is apparently free from typographical errors the introduction gives evidence of very hasty preparation, first names and initials of writers are often omitted and the names of such well known ornithologists as Robert Ridgway and C. F. Batchelder are consistently misspelled.

All these matters are however trivial faults in an attractive and well gotten-up volume.—W. S.

**'The Birds of North Carolina.'**<sup>1</sup>—One of the most notable contributions to North American ornithology during the past year is the volume by the Messrs. Brimley and Mr. T. Gilbert Pearson on the birds of North Carolina. Adequate State bird books have heretofore been issued only by the more northern commonwealths but North Carolina now comes to the fore with one of the most satisfactory works of this kind that has yet appeared—a work that is a credit to the authors, the publishers and the State authorities and Audubon Society, who made its publication possible.

The text consists of a historical sketch by Mr. Pearson followed by a consideration of Life Zones and Distribution by C. S. Brimley. Then come keys for identification and a systematic consideration of the 342 species and subspecies of birds found in the State. The appendices comprise a bibliography, a set of migration tables covering thirty-one years' observations at Raleigh by the Messrs. Brimley and Mr. S. C. Bruner, similar to those published by one of the authors in 'The Auk' for 1917. There is also a Glossary and no less than three indices. For some reason many editors fail to realize that a single index is twice as useful as two and that there is no possible advantage in the separation of the references which only makes it more easy for one to search in the wrong place for what he is seeking.

The main text contains under each species, a description taken from Chapman's 'Handbook,' a brief statement of the general range and range in North Carolina, followed by an account of the bird in the State—its habits, abundance, records of captures of specimens of rare species, nests and eggs etc. The plan adopted seems admirable and the method of handling the data leaves little to be desired. One or two species seem to rest upon rather slender evidence as birds of North Carolina, as for instance, *Puffinus*

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<sup>1</sup> Birds of North Carolina. By T. Gilbert Pearson, C. S. Brimley and H. H. Brimley. Volume IV. North Carolina Geological and Economic Survey. Raleigh, 1919. Royal 8 vo. pp. i-xxiii, + 1-380, pl. 24, figs. 275.



Taverner, P. A. 1920. "Taverner's 'Birds of Eastern Canada'" *The Auk* 37, 147–149. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4072997>.

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