

REVIEWS

Bird Art in Science. By Richard L. Scheffel. New York State Museum and Science Service, Albany, New York, 1964, Educational Leaflet No. 16. 50 cents. 8½ x 11 in., vi + 30 pp.

The New York State Museum and Science Service has recently published an attractive illustrated leaflet "Bird Art in Science" to supplement the Museum's permanent exhibit on this subject. Following an introductory section on the uses of bird art and its early development, are brief summaries of the contributions of painters of the birds of North America from early colonial times through Louis Agassiz Fuertes, with mention of a few contemporary artists. A brief bibliography is included.

New York State teachers may request free copies, up to the largest number of students in a single class, from the Museum Education Office. Others may purchase copies at fifty cents each from the New York State Museum and Science Service, Education Building, Albany, New York 12224, remittance made payable to the New York State Education Department. D. McIlroy

Audubon's Wildlife. By Edwin Way Teale, with selections from the writings of John James Audubon. A Studio Book — The Viking Press, New York, 1964: 9 x 11 in., viii + 254 pp., 94 pls. (23 in color) of Audubon's birds and mammals. \$15.00

With selections from Audubon's Journal, Mr. Teale pictures Wild America as Audubon saw and experienced it in the early part of the 19th century. Most of the observations which Audubon recorded are references to life along the waterways which were the major routes of regular travel.

Mr. Teale introduces each section of the book with his own comments and in many cases with his comparison of today's conditions. The sections are illustrated by groups of well-reproduced pen drawings and color paintings of birds and mammals. Informative notes have been added to each plate, making the illustrations more meaningful to the reader.

Practically unedited life histories are arranged according to specific habitat groups. These selections go into detail about Audubon's adventures and activities in the field. That he enjoyed the excitement of the chase and felt intense satisfaction in taking game is brought out repeatedly, as in his descriptions of buffalo and cougar hunts and the mention of the large bags of birds he regularly took. To his credit, however, it should be added that he saw the folly of wanton destruction of wildlife and cited many arguments in favor of controls that would curb ruthless destruction.

Edwin Way Teale has carefully selected those portions from Audubon's Journal that give clear insight into the extensive knowledge of nature so vividly portrayed in Audubon's writings and paintings. Alice E. Ulrich

Thoreau on Birds. Compiled and with commentary by Helen Cruickshank. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1964: 7 x 10 in., 322 pp., 16 pls. in black and white. \$7.95.

The introduction discusses Thoreau's philosophy and how, for more acute observation of life, he placed himself in intimate contact with nature. Many pages of excerpts about the birds he observed around Concord and especially at Walden Pond are followed by a group of illustrations taken from books by Audubon, Nuttall and Wilson which Thoreau used as references for identification of birds. A reproduction of a map printed in 1852 shows the places around Concord which he visited and wrote about in his Journal. An alphabetical list of Thoreau's birds with today's common or scientific names is included.

Thoreau's writings on birds are in general limited to New England. He did not describe new birds, but wrote about local birds, their food, nesting habits and song. He was among the first to keep records for Eastern Massachusetts, a practise which has been kept up almost uninterruptedly to the present time.

The selections illustrate the fine sensitivity Thoreau felt for nature, whether it be in his comments on the structure and form of a fall bird nest, or in his description of May bird songs and the related seasonal emergence of plants and flowers; in those passages in which he deplored the unnecessary destruction of hedge and forest habitats for monetary gain, or in the way he accepted predators as a natural control measure, a theory in agreement with good wildlife management today, more than a century later.

Mrs. Cruickshank has selected choice passages from Thoreau's work and has, with the addition of her explanatory commentary, compiled a book that makes fascinating reading for anyone interested in Thoreau, birds, nature or the out-of-doors. Alice E. Ulrich

Birds of the New York Area. By John Bull. Harper and Row, 1964; 5½ x 8½ in., xiv + 540 pp. \$8.95.

Like most good, new bird books today, John Bull's book has a foreword by Roger Tory Peterson. Of the two major parts into which it is divided, Part I consists of only 65 pages. An average reader should take no more than an hour to peruse this section, and it should repay even the slowest reader interested in the birds of the New York area to spend the required time. Part II consists of accounts of every species of bird recorded in the New York area. Rightly, no descriptions of birds are included, illustrations are purely decorative. Maps are accurate and informative. The Bibliography is a very complete list of references cited, not a list of all published items referring to birds in the area. There are three identical copies of one map, on the end papers and on pages 506-507; surely one of these could have been altered to show present and another past ground cover.

In Part I the work of Mr. Bull's predecessors is well covered. There are references to the collections and data of many people, including Mr. Roy Latham of Orient, Long Island, all of which have been consulted—a truly painstaking task. In the chapter "Quantitative Data—Population Dynamics" Mr. Bull defines such terms as common, abundant, rare, etc.

It is one of the more valuable chapters; without reading and understanding this first, the section on status in the species accounts of Part II would be worthless.

As yet, there are insufficient precise data on breeding populations in the area. We "know" Mr. Bull is correct when he states on page 152 that "The Red-tailed Hawk has decreased considerably in the past thirty years or so". This statement is based on the accumulated experience of competent naturalists in the area, supplemented by statistics from publications and local bird clubs. The day may come when we know that, in a given habitat, so many pairs of Red-tailed Hawks per hundred acres is the "saturation point" and that the breeding population is only about 40% of what it could be or only 60% of what it had been a certain number of years previously. We need such figures in studying the effects on wild birds of the encroachment of civilization or the inconsiderate use of pesticides. The statistics presented are a great step forward; as, under migration one is told of actual numbers seen (or at least reasonable estimates by competent observers) on certain dates. These will allow us to make more accurate statements in the future about declining or increasing populations.

Lack of data in parts of the book should furnish an incentive to birders to help in gathering such information for future editions. If you or your bird club feel that more Purple Finches breed in your region than indicated by the map on page 425, it must be that the information was not available to Mr. Bull. It is up to you to make accurate counts available. I might add here that John Bull has been selected as the editor of the State Bird Book being sponsored by our Federation; if we want to present a book even half as fine as this for New York State, many facts are yet to be published and thus made available to Mr. Bull.

It is high praise to be able to state that the mistakes found are all trivial, unavoidable in a work requiring a mass of references, notes, data, knowledge, and dreary proofreading. R. S. Palmer, in compiling species-data file cards for use in work on his Handbook of North American Birds, reads each page of a new publication very carefully, marking each typographical and other error that he detects. He has thus marked Mr. Bull's work but two or three times (on page 77 it should be *Puffinus diomedea*)—this is phenomenal! A source of possible confusion to readers is the use of a person's name in parentheses, as "(Helmuth)" on page 237 referring to a Black-backed Gull record dated May 14, 1950. Nowhere is it explained that this means that person—Helmuth—is responsible for the record, and that it does not refer to a specimen in Helmuth's collection or to a reference in the Bibliography.

Addition of a list of local bird clubs and their locations would help newcomers get acquainted with others interested in their avocation. As a youth brought up in the area covered by the book, I was familiar with Chapman's, Griscom's and Cruickshank's works, yet it never dawned on me that there might be someone interested in wildlife nearer to me than the American Museum of Natural History.

The writing is clear; words not defined in a standard desk dictionary are defined in a very short glossary. However, this book is not designed for the very beginner, but if you make any pretense of knowing the birds of the New York City region, or belong to a club or take part in annual or regular bird walks there, you should have a copy. If you are interested in birds and live in adjacent areas, you should own the book. And if you visit N.Y.C. frequently and are a birder, get a copy on your next visit or write for it beforehand. Edgar M. Reilly, Jr.

Two Conservation Committee members have been authors recently. Dwight Chamberlain of Rochester had an article on the Great Horned Owl "Bubo of Virginianus" in the December-January 1964-1965 issue of *The Conservationist*. Dr. Walter Spofford is the author of *Audubon Conservation Report*, No. 1 on the Golden Eagle, available from the National Audubon Society for \$1.00.

BULLETIN EXCHANGE

As of January 25, 1965, the following member clubs are interested in exchanging club bulletins:

- Alan Devoe Bird Club—**The Warbler**
Miss Hortense Barten
Old Chatham, N. Y. 12136
- Brooklyn Bird Club—**Brooklyn Bird Club Newsletter** Oct. thru May
Brooklyn Bird Club, Academy of Music
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y. 11217
- Buffalo Audubon Society—**Audubon Outlook** quarterly
Mr. & Mrs. Harold A. Dodge, Back Creek Rd.
Hamburg, N. Y. 14075
- Chemung Valley Audubon Society—**The Bulletin, Chemung Valley Aud. Soc.** 3 times a year
Miss Wilifred I. Howard, 610 Coburn Street
Elmira, N. Y.
- Cortland County Bird Club—**The Chickadee** bimonthly
Cortland Co. Bird Club
320 West Road, Cortland, N. Y.
- Greene County Bird Club—**The Whip-poor-will**
Greene County Bird Club
Catskill, N. Y. 12414
- Huntington Audubon Society—**Newsletter** bimonthly except July
Mrs. Ellen McMullen, 8 Norwood Road
Northport, N. Y. 11768
- Jamestown Audubon Society—**News Letter** bimonthly
Jamestown Audubon Soc'y, 88 Fluvanna Ave.
Jamestown, N. Y. 14701
- John Burroughs Natural History Society—**The Chirp** bimonthly
Mrs. Daniel Smiley, Lake Mohonk
New Paltz, N. Y. 12561
- Linnaean Society of New York—**Linnaean News-Letter** 9 times a year
Secretary, Linnaean Society of N. Y.
Am. Museum of Natural History, N. Y. 10024
- The Kingbird**