

BOOK REVIEWS

The Bird Watcher's America. Edited by Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr. McGraw-Hill, 1965. 441 p. illus, index. \$7.50.

If the reader can keep from dipping into a chapter on one of his favorite areas long enough to read the editor's Introduction first, he will find there the list of instructions which Dr. Pettingill sent to each member of his "team of authors"—an intriguing preface to the forty-six area descriptions by forty-four naturalist-writers. These instructions were suggestions on what each author *might* wish to include, plus blanket permission to handle his area as he saw fit, within very broad limits. Hence the delightful variety of presentations which follows, with articles arranged by: the altitudinal zones on the way up a mountain, a duck's-eye view of the seasons, the steps to obtaining a new breeding-warbler record, stages in ecological succession after a forest fire, etc.

This is a "Baedeker" to consult for advice before visiting one of the areas described and to bring along on the trip for evening-before anticipatory reading. It is broadly informative as well as fascinating to browse through in the absence of any plans to visit an area (though it may have the effect of galvanizing academic interest into plans). As Jeanne Goodwin put it in her *Audubon Magazine* review, this book "may function better for the birder who wants to know where to go than for the birder who wants to know what is offered in an area he already has selected."

The collection seems very well balanced ecologically as well as geographically. There is some ecological repetition from one chapter to another, but by the nature of the beast this is bound to be so, and I wouldn't choose any for omission in favor of a different area to be described instead. After all, the criterion of ornithological interest should outweigh that of even-handed coverage.

Since this is not just a guide to facilitate checking off life birds but a compend of expert presentations on habitats and migration habits, it seems regrettable that ecological and geographical terms aren't indexed. Though the geographical and ecological arrangement of the contents makes it easy enough to look up a *place*, this isn't an adequate key to the fund of ecological information in the various chapters.

A second minor complaint; several times I felt the need of a map, especially while reading the Nova Scotia chapter, where understanding of the author's points requires a good grasp of the ins and outs of the Nova Scotia coastline; a simple sketch map accompanying each selection would have been helpful. But perhaps the authors' excellently drawn verbal descriptions make maps not really essential.

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The Giant Canada Goose. Harold C. Hanson. Southern Illinois University Press, 1965, 226 pp., illus. \$9.75

The story of the prolonged efforts from 1922 to 1951 have the Giant Canada Goose, *Branta canadensis maxima*, recognized as a distinct race of the Canada Goose is a study of perseverance in the face of official skepticism and lack of interest. For most of the time W. B. Meshon and R. P. Holland were the persistent proponents of the validity of this race, which was considered to be practically extinct when it was finally recognized. It is so labelled in Peter Scott's *Key to the Wildfowl of the World* (1957). This story and Dr. Harold Hanson's discovery of geese of this race wintering near Rochester, Minnesota in 1962 comprise the introductory chapter of *The Giant Cnanda Goose*. Later Dr. Hanson found that breeders in the upper mid-west and great plains had been propagating this race for decades.

Statistics of the physical characteristics of the various races of the Canada Goose are presented in detail. Data on the life cycle of *maxima* necessary for successful management of the population are given, with frequent comparison with other races. Maps of breeding and wintering ranges, and photographs are included. The captions for A and B of Figure 58, wings of yearling and adult male Canada Geese, appear to be reversed.

The non-professional will find much interesting information scattered thru the book, although he may not wish to study the tables of measurements in detail. Chapters on feeding habits, nesting, physical changes caused by the stress of molting, and behavior all contain details of interest to the birdwatcher as well as the professional in game management. I suspect that after reading the summary of field characters, many readers will scan flocks of Canada Geese for *maxima* this fall, as they now do for *hutchinsii* or *minima*.

Dorothy McIlroy

The Birds of Kentucky. Robert M. Mengel. Ornithological Monographs No. 3, American Ornithologists' Union. xiv + 581 pp. \$10. Copies may be ordered from Mr. Burt L. Monroe, Treasurer, Ridge Road, Anchorage, Kentucky 40001.

The introductory section, approximately a quarter of the book, includes in part: description of the physiography, climate and vegetation of the various regions of Kentucky; discussion of the distribution of breeding birds; comments on species that have increased in numbers, decreased, or vanished; the relation of vegetational stages and disturbances to present bird distribution in Kentucky. The detailed species accounts of the 296 species considered to have been reliably recorded in Kentucky include status, seasonal population changes, breeding records and distribution, and subspecies. A list of all references cited or mentioned is appended. Students of Kentucky birds will find this not only a useful reference to the status and history of the birds of Kentucky to 1960, but also a guide to studies needed to fill in gaps in knowledge.

The following comments are pertinent to the Federation's projected New York State bird book. First, preparation took an astonishingly long time: field work 1948-1952; first draft completed 1956; records added thru 1960; publication August 1965. Fortunately, New York State has a good earlier bird book to build on. Second, under species accounts there frequently appear remarks about scarcity of breeding records. For example, under Red-bellied Woodpecker - "Although . . . conspicuous and common over large areas only 5 more or less precisely dated breeding records are available." Mengel states in the introduction that "severest difficulty was posed by the scarcity of precise quantitative data concerning population structure. Local students today can perhaps pursue no activity more worthwhile than accurately measuring bird populations in representative habitat types." Federation members take note, for this ties in with Allen Benton's hope that each club will conduct at least one breeding bird census each year, and also with the nest record card program. Third, possibly not applicable to New York State conditions, is Mengel's statement that he has appended lists of specimens examined to the species accounts because "so many of the specimens I have seen are in advanced stages of deterioration and decay, and in danger of early loss." This suggests possible future importance of our Photographs of New York State Rarities series in the *Kingbird* in which photographs and accurate data on the sighting are on record.

Dorothy McIlroy