

BOOK NOTICE.

BIRDS OF EASTERN CANADA, Memoir 104, No. 3, Biological Series, Geological Survey of Canada, by P. A. Taverner: King's Printer, Ottawa, 1919. 297 pages, octavo with 50 colored plates, illustrating 105 species and varieties; price 50 cents.

The introduction to this work is unusually attractive, and will be found both interesting and instructive to the student of Birds. It deals with classification, distribution and other problems and even has a chapter on Attracting Birds about the home.

The index appears very complete and comprises English, French, and scientific names.

A most useful feature, that might well be copied in similar works is the description of the different classes, orders and families. Too often the young student is left to surmise as to the scope of these divisions of the science.

One of the most attractive features of the book is the inclusion of the section "Field Marks." No other part of the work will receive as earnest study from puzzled nature students, to whom unidentified birds are a frequent experience. After one has pursued birds long enough to have identified 75 species, he is apt to make a good guess at the identity of any unknown, and needs only confirmation from a book to change surmise into certainty, and the section under consideration provides easy reference for such a puzzle.

The key is good, but if a key is worth providing, it is worth while to carry it out to the limit, and not abandon the seeker after knowledge at the broad heading "Sparrows," and leave him to grope through 34 different species, when a color key could easily have been given on a few added pages.

The colored plates, by Frank Hennessey, are on the whole, very creditable. Indeed, the colors are exceptionally true to nature. It would seem to the writer that this book illustrates well a missed opportunity. To certain of a large circle of readers, it is regrettable that the contents of the book are limited so nearly to bare outlines. It has come out as very little more than a book of reference, wasting a splendid opportunity to change casual readers into bird-loving enthusiasts. There are so many interesting details of bird life that could be added to such work, and the author is so competent to add them, that

one is almost tempted to regret that the book was sent out ill equipped for what might have been a greater accomplishment.

It happens to come within the scope of the reviewer's knowledge that the added touches, without which the book makes comparatively uninteresting reading, were actually provided by the author, and were eliminated by a mistaken editorial policy. The reason, for the elimination is unknown, but could hardly have been aught than either poor judgment or economy. For the sake of the future, it is to be hoped that it was not the former, and if the reason were economy, it was a most erroneous application of the term. True economy lies in the production of the greatest and best results at a reasonable cost. In the case of a train from Toronto to Ottawa, there might be an economy of coal in stopping the train 10 miles before its destination, but no one would be so deluded as to claim real economy in throwing the passengers on their own resources for the last ten miles, when the equipment was ready to complete the journey. The present instance is a parallel. The names of the birds have been published, descriptions added, field marks, nesting, distribution, all of the skeleton on which to hang vital and interesting facts, clothed in language that would attract the casual reader and open many eyes to the charm that lies in this as in every other department of natural science, but the opportunity has been lost through no fault of the author.

It is so unusual, in such a work to omit all details of the capture of rarities, that the reviewer cannot become sufficiently accustomed to the change to consider it other than an error of omission. Take for instance, Blue-wing Warbler. "Though taken only once in Canada," how much better to have said, "One taken at Point Pelee on September 2nd, 1906, is the only Canadian specimen." The information might just as well have been given definitely while the writer was at it, and the book would have been worth just that much more as a reference.

Perhaps one may be judged meticulous for such fault finding, but the duty of the reviewer is to state the case as he sees it, in the hope that his opinion may have a favorable influence in the future.

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