

Arrangements for the camp are in the hands of the State Secretary, Dr. W. L. Crowther, 180 Macquarie Street, Hobart, to whom early intimation of intention to attend should be sent. Please notify the Hon. General Secretary also. Here is an ideal way to spend a holiday, and members are asked to ensure a good muster.

Reviews

[* *England's Birds*. By W. K. Richmond. London, Faber & Faber Ltd. Price, 10s. 6d. stg.]

When Mr. Richmond's *Quest for Birds* came under our notice we were impressed with his ability to take us with him as he stalked the birds of the copses and spinneys or splashed through water and mud after waders: and he has done just that again. It is necessarily difficult, here in Australia, to place England's birds on the background of scenery that we are used to, but the author obviates that inasmuch as the proper atmosphere and locale is so interwoven with his descriptions.

Favoured hunting-grounds are river mouths and marshes on England's east coast, whither severe weather drives numbers of birds from the Continent, so that many a stranger appears overnight—chiefly water birds, ducks and the like. Unfortunately they bring not only a thrill to the ever-expectant watcher, but some urge to kill to hunters around the estuaries. We think that Mr. Richmond *should* have written "dastardly," not nearly have done so, when referring to punt-guns. Here in Victoria several sections of the Game Act impose heavy penalties for using or having punt-guns in one's possession.

A note on the Starling is interesting. Even in its home country it has "recently . . . come in for a lot of criticism and contumely, many writers saying that it is so abundant as to be a pest." The opinion of some observers concerning the species would probably be expressed more forcibly in many parts of Australia, yet here, as there, it has its champions. The Barn-Owl is referred to as hunting by daylight in mid-winter—does it do so here, too? Many other notes such as these suggest parallels, or the converse, with the same or allied birds in Australia.

Mr. Richmond is still worried about the territory theory in bird-life. He does not deny the principle—"territory is a fact of bird-life, not a theory"—but he believes it is much more vague and elastic than the theorists originally gave us to understand, and that its repercussions have been its most valuable incident.

Bird calls, transcribed into written words, are prominent through the pages, and their importance as field-identification characters is stressed. Interesting notes on

the birds of the famous Bass Rock, with conjectures as to how the young first reach the waters far below, a page or two on migration, a trenchant criticism of this or that accepted idea, and again graphic descriptions of red-letter days in bird-observing—these indicate the divers matters dealt with. Admirably indeed has the author captured atmosphere—"the little yellow willow wrens dropping their little songs—a cool measured trickle of . . . notes," and the weird lament of the curlew rising from the marsh.—C.E.B.

[*The Handbook of British Birds*. By H. F. Witherby, F. C. R. Jourdain, N. F. Ticehurst and B. W. Tucker. Vol. I—Crows to Flycatchers. London, 1938, H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd. Pp. 1-326 + i-xl. Price, 25s. stg. If whole five volumes purchased—price, 21s. stg. per vol.]

The aim is "to produce a work of real practical utility, not only to the professed ornithologist, but to the beginner." The objective will without doubt be attained—and something more. It is amazing that so much has been collated and presented in such a pertinent form and in such a compact manner. Included in this volume are the Corvidæ, Sturnidæ, Oriolidæ, Fringillidæ, Ploceidæ, Alaudidæ, Motacillidæ, Certhiidæ, Sittidæ, Paridæ, Laniidæ, Bombycillidæ and Muscicapidæ.

Every aspect of the birds is dealt with. Thus the Raven, which opens the list, is dealt with under habitat, field-characters and general habits, voice, display and posturing, breeding, food, distribution, migrations, distribution abroad, description, characters, and allied forms. Each section is comprehensive and informative and, in some instances, detailed. Nesting notes on the Raven, for example, are directed not only to the type of nest and locality and the number of eggs, but record also that both sexes help to build the structure, that the hen does practically all the brooding, being fed by the male, that the fledglings are fed by both parents, that the incubation period is 20-21 days and the fledgling period 5-6 weeks, and finally that the bird is single-brooded.

The descriptions are well set out and describe male, female if different, seasonal plumage, nestling, juvenile, first winter and first summer phases. Illustrations in the text often amplify these descriptions and other points, there being about fifty black and white blocks of this nature. Distribution and breeding distribution maps, carefully compiled and prepared, are included; and there are thirty-two colour-plates illustrative of nearly all the species dealt with. These are well executed by leading ornithological artists, and the grouping is often designed to stress contrasts and comparisons. Numerous plumage phases are most useful and fill a long-felt want.

The preface states that the work is so much more than a new edition of *A Practical Handbook of British Birds*

that an alteration of title was considered advisable. Any-one can see that it is an entirely new work, the preparation of which must have involved a tremendous amount of labour.

A useful glossary of terms and notes on methods of measuring, and sketches of typical feet and bills, as keys to the orders and sub-orders extend over a number of pages. Nothing appears to have been overlooked, and the learned authors are to be heartily complimented on a production that is not only a field-book and volume for the systematic worker in one, but a compendium of every phase of ornithic matter—all-embracing in its scope and to be valued accordingly.—C.E.B.

[* "Distribution of the Royal Albatross in the New Zealand Region." By R. A. Falla. From *Rec. Cant. Mus.*, vol. IV, no. 4, pp. 213-217, 1938.]

To fill in gaps in the knowledge of distribution and races of *Diomedea epomophora* is necessary. Eight skins examined—four each from Campbell Island and from coastal waters east of New Zealand—show differences in dimensions (from 630 to 690 mm. in the wing) and indicate two size groups. Murphy has found the same in a larger series examined by him. The greatest wing length is in a fledgling bird not then flying.

Falla considers that there is little doubt that Murphy's name *sandfordi* is applicable to the breeding birds at the Chatham Islands. The Royal Albatross has recently (1935) been found breeding on the New Zealand mainland at Taiaroa Head.—C.E.B.

[*Wild Nature in Australia*. By Charles Barrett. Melbourne, Robertson & Mullens Ltd. Price, 2s. 6d.]

Mr. Barrett has done as much as anyone to bring the appeal of Australia's wild-life to the public—through his books and booklets and newspaper writings. In this present collection of photographs, with short graphic descriptions, all phases of life are included, and a number of our spectacular birds and beasts, with insects and reptiles for diversity, are presented in a manner something beyond the elementary accounts so often foisted upon the public, but nevertheless not too recondite to lose the "popular" aspect.

One feels that there is much of the author's own ramblings in the volume—so that whether it be the giant worm *Megascolides* of South Gippsland that is being described, or the lizards of the interior, or tree-climbing kangaroos of the north, or the numerous "wonder" birds, the accounts are those of the actual observer, not of the compiler of other writers' notes.

The booklet is attractive and useful. Perhaps a stouter cover would ensure its greater durability.—C.E.B.