

## Blue Jay Bookshelf

**THE BIRDS OF THE SASKATCHEWAN RIVER, CARLTON TO CUMBERLAND.** By C. Stuart Houston and Maurice G. Street. 1959. Saskatchewan Natural History Society, Special Pub. 2, 205 pp., 4 maps, illus. Price \$1.50.

In this volume the authors have brought together a mass of carefully compiled and unusually well-documented data from many sources, some of them obscure, on the birds known to occur at present and in the past along the Saskatchewan River between Carlton and Cumberland. Needless to say the results are an indispensable reference work for all who are interested in the ornithology of that part of Saskatchewan. The usefulness of the work, however, greatly transcends the geographic scope indicated by its title.

For over a century the historic Saskatchewan River was part of the main interior route to the great Northwest. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that some of the specimens collected along its banks by naturalists in those exploratory days represented species and subspecies then unknown to science. The original descriptions of species like Clay-colored Sparrow, Forster's Tern, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Gray-crowned Rosy Finch, and Smith's Longspur, are based on specimens collected along the Saskatchewan. Type localities like Carlton House and Cumberland House have become familiar to all persons doing taxonomic and nomenclatural research on North American birds. To most, however, these ornithologically important place names are familiar by name only and the descriptions of the site of old Fort Carlton and of Cumberland contained in this volume are of particular interest.

The senior author has spared no effort to study the records of the expeditions concerned, particularly those of the first and second Franklin expeditions. Thus he is able to present considerably more significant ornithological information about them than has appeared heretofore under one cover. As one example, through the study of an article in an obscure botanical publication he was able to ascertain that the type local-

ity of *Sterna forsteri* is some 10 to 50 miles west of Cumberland in Saskatchewan instead of considerably east of that place probably in Manitoba as has heretofore been supposed.

The bulk of the book (pages 35-199) is devoted to a very scholarly account of the 259 species of birds known from the area. An additional seven species are of the hypothetical status. For each species the status, history, and distribution are treated under five headings: River, Carlton to Cumberland; Carlton; Prince Albert; Cumberland House; and Nipawin. Pertinent data from the records of the early naturalists like Richardson, Drummond, and Blakiston through to those of the contemporary observers are presented and these include some heretofore unpublished records of the contemporaries. A feature of the contemporary work is the particularly mature knowledge of the Nipawin region gathered mainly by the junior author. Of 241 species recorded there he has found the nests of no less than 131 and has records of flightless young of another 10. He presents succinctly much information on migration dates, nesting dates, and nest sites. It is interesting that the authors consider Nipawin may be the site of the earliest (July 24, 1691) record of the Passenger Pigeon in western Canada.

The historical and biographical notes (pages 5-21) and the numerous historical data usefully interpreted and scattered throughout the text are an extremely valuable aspect of the work. Also cleared up are a number of points concerning place names in the area and some vague terminology used by the early naturalists. There are four maps, two photographs, sketches of Richardson and Drummond, and a frontispiece drawing of old Fort Carlton. The book closes with a very useful bibliography containing much historical source material, some of which has been overlooked by ornithologists.

The authors are to be highly commended for their initiative and thoroughness in producing this scholarly work which doubtless will retain its usefulness for a long time to come. The Saskatchewan Natural History Society also is to be commended for

making such a useful publication available at such a modest price.—W. Earl Godfrey, National Museum of Canada.

**BIRD WATCHERS' DATE BOOK.** Colonial Publishing Inc., 10 Thacker Street, Boston, Mass. Price \$1.65.

This little notebook (about 7 inches by 5½ inches) is called "an illustrated engagement calendar" by the publishers. The spaces provided under headings Morning, Afternoon, and Evening, might well be used for engagements or might be used by the avid birdwatcher for observations to supplement those made in the spaces provided for the owner's "bird notes this week." The cover has a colorful illustration featuring the Baltimore Oriole and each page of notes is illustrated by a black and white sketch of a bird. The only criticism one can offer of this handy little book is that about one-quarter of the birds discussed are unknown, and another quarter are uncommon, here on the prairie. It would, however, be a suitable gift for friends on the eastern seaboard. — Marjorie Ledingham, Regina.

**FLORA OF ALBERTA.** By E. H. Moss. University of Toronto Press, Toronto 5, Canada, October 3, 1959. Price \$10.00.

This book, printed in the Netherlands for the University of Toronto Press, has 546 pages. The paper is excellent and type is clear and easily read. There are no illustrations but it would be impossible to include pictures of all the plants and still sell the book so reasonably. The book is a technical manual giving keys to separate all the different species of vascular plants and giving a brief description of the appearance and distribution of each species.

Dr. E. H. Moss, Professor Emeritus, University of Alberta, has made a real contribution to the botanical literature of Canada. For the first time all known information about the plants of Alberta has been collected together under one cover. This has been a tremendous task for in Alberta the range of habitat is extremely wide. In the southeast corner of the province on a dry bank one location of *Yucca glauca* Nutt. is known. In the high mountains along the southwestern part of the province there

are many alpine and western species with restricted ranges. The province extends northward through different types of grassland and forest to include plants like *Astragalus yukonis* Jones which are found only in the most northerly parts of Alberta.

Dr. Moss has made free use of previously published lists and manuals of the plants of Alberta and adjacent regions. He has examined several extensive plant collections besides the University of Alberta herbarium which includes his own collection of 12,000 specimens. For 35 years Dr. Moss has been in Alberta as a professor of botany at the University. He was certainly the man to make, as he says in the preface, "a pioneer effort to record and describe the vascular plants of Alberta with keys to their identification."

Dr. Moss makes special acknowledgment of the help that he has received from the published catalogues of Dr. H. M. Raup, National Museum (for Northern Alberta), and the lists of our Saskatchewan-born Mr. A. J. Breitung who collected in the Cypress Hills and the Waterton area. He also pays special tribute to the excellent and extensive collections of Dr. G. H. Turner of Fort Saskatchewan, and Dr. W. C. McCalla of Calgary, whose photographs are so well known to **Blue Jay** readers.

In spite of the fact that this work includes 1605 species and 215 varieties in 499 different genera in 104 different plant families, Dr. Moss modestly admits that there are probably other species which should be included. Anyone who has specimens not included in this book is invited to send the specimens to Dr. Moss, Botany Department, University of Alberta, so that supplementary lists may be made up.

All floras of any value must, in order to be accurate, be rather technical. Dr. Moss' **Flora of Alberta** thus presents something of a challenge to the amateur botanist, but anyone with persistence can master the keys, and by checking the descriptions can be reasonably sure that he has properly identified the plants which he has collected. Difficult species may always be sent to the closest herbarium for verification.

The families are arranged as they usually are in the more comprehen-

sive floras of North America. Genera are arranged alphabetically within families and species are arranged alphabetically within genera. This means that true phylogenetic relationships are not shown between species, genera or families. Some phylogenetic relationship is shown in the keys, for instance when a large genus, e.g., *Carex* which has 123 species in Alberta, is divided into sections. Dr. Moss explains that he has used an alphabetical arrangement to avoid use of numbers which would add to typesetting costs. However, one regrets that he has not used a natural arrangement which would show relationships as he sees them.

There will always be disagreements among botanists about the correct names for different species. Dr. Moss frankly admitted in conversation with me that there were many cases where he did not know just what to do about the names. Fortunately for those interested in plants of the western Canadian provinces he has not waited to settle all his doubts before publishing. Looking at some of the nomenclatural problem spots I find that Dr. Moss has been conservative in his approach and I feel that he has made his decisions carefully. There will be some name changes in future editions. Botany is interesting partly because there is still so much to be learned and changes in names simply indicate our growing knowledge.

When I was in Alberta this past summer on the Grassland Tour which preceded the International Botanical Congress I added a number of Alberta plants to my collection. Some of these were new collections for my herbarium, like *Danthonia parryi* Scribn. from the Stavely Range Station and *Saussurea densa* (Hook) Rydb. from Tableau Mountain. I still have at least a half dozen unidentified plants which I shall look for in Dr. Moss' book. It is as such a working tool that the **Flora of Alberta** will prove most useful. People of Alberta are fortunate in now having a complete manual of the vascular plants of their province. It will be of considerable value in British Columbia and Saskatchewan, too, for in many genera exactly the same species occur in all three provinces. — George F. Ledingham, Regina.

**MUSHROOMS.** By Albert Pilat and Otto Usak. Spring Books, London. 56/6.

Produced after six years joint effort by this mycologist-artist team this book contains 120 8 x 11 inch color prints of mushrooms at natural size showing gill structure, stem cross-section, and with color sketches of spores.

The introduction deals with the morphology, biology, anatomy and histology of the higher mushrooms. There is a chapter on mycorrhiza, the symbiosis of mushrooms and trees. Propagation is discussed. There is a list of edible mushrooms, an analysis of nutritive value, a copy of the Czech food regulations, recipes and a chapter on mushroom poisoning.

The bibliography lists works of Bolton, Buller, Fries, Ramsbottom, and Schaeffer, but not Christensen, Smith or Thomas Gussow and Odell are mentioned in the chapter on poisoning but not in the list. Apparently the author is more familiar with the works of Europeans than with those on this side of the Atlantic.

Among the edible mushrooms the author considers *Armillariella mellea* inferior, a choice which is certain to be disputed by local mycophagists.

Any book of this size (340 pages) cannot include all the individual species of agarics, and several are not listed, however mushroomers will find it a valuable reference.—Tony Capusten, Prince Albert.

**CONSERVATION DIRECTORY (1959).** A listing of Organizations and Officials concerned with Natural Resources. National Wildlife Federation, Washington, D.C. Price 50c.

A copy of this directory of organizations—government and private, national and regional—concerned with conservation, comes to our president, and anyone wishing to do so may borrow it. The directory includes international, and Canadian and Latin American, as well as American organizations.

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selective rodent inhabitant and always chooses the liver for accumulation of its eggs. Two human cases have been described, one from India and one from Panama, possibly through eating of edible predator—meat.