

Toronto Field Naturalists' Club

(11)

DECEMBER MEETINGS

Monday, December 1st, 1952 at 8.15 p.m.

at the

ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

KODACHROME NIGHT, featuring --

1. "A Naturalist takes up Photography" by Mrs. Margaret Marsh.
2. "A Photographer takes up Natural History", by Mr. Reg. Corlett.
3. "Ferns, Fungi and Flowers", by Mrs. Janet Goodwin.
4. "Small Creatures on a Rock Island", by Mrs. Mary Ferguson.
5. "Reforestration Project", by Messrs. Henry and Sydney Cooper.
6. "Insect Studies", by Mr. Ralph Presgrave.

ROTUNDA DISPLAY

The Junior Field Naturalists' Club will have a table displaying their Club Magazine, "Flight". This little publication is made up, literally, from cover to cover, by members of the Junior Club, and is well worth seeing. A limited number of copies will be on sale at 25¢ each.

Tickets for the two lectures by Mr. Dick Bird, well-known Canadian Naturalist, which are to be held on Tuesday, February 24th and Thursday, February 26th in the auditorium of Bloor Collegiate, will be on sale in the rotunda. These lectures are sponsored jointly by the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and the Toronto Field Naturalists' Club. One of the lectures will be on British Guiana, the other on Newfoundland. For the benefit of members who are unable to attend the December meeting, tickets are also obtainable at the Federation Office, 85 King Street East, Toronto, telephone Em. 3-2583, or through our own Secretary. How about tickets for some of your naturalist friends as a Christmas gift?

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DECEMBER OUTING

This will be a geology walk. We will visit an island or bar formed by glacial Lake Iroquois, followed by a trip down the Humber from Lambton to the Old Mill.

Saturday, December 6th, at 2.00 p.m.

Meet at the subway at Scarlett Road and Dundas Street.

Leader - Dr. Peter Peach.

If it is snowing at the time the outing is scheduled, or if there should be 3" of snow covering the ground, the outing will be cancelled.

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This Club has now grown to such proportions that it is impossible to carry members whose fees are in arrears. Anyone whose fees are not paid before Christmas will receive no more notices or Newsletters.

Fee \$2.00 per year - Secretary - Mrs. J.B. Stewart,
21 Millwood Road,
Toronto.

Toronto Field Naturalists' Club.



NEWSLETTER

Number 111

November 1952.

"Southward In Spring" - Part II

Six o'clock in the morning of April 18th was the turning point in our journey for it was then we started north. As we drove out of Key West we looked back for a last glimpse of the beautiful row of coconut palms lining the boulevard. In the early morning the roadside bays and sloughs were rich in birdlife and we had the good fortune to get a good look at a Wurdemann's Heron. This cross between a great white and a great blue is now regarded as a separate species, and is easily recognised by its pure white head on the body of a great blue heron. We also had the opportunity of seeing a Ward's heron, which some consider a subspecies. This bird also has a very light head, almost white, but retains the black crest plume of the great blue.

It was in the tropical setting of the Keys that we saw our first blue grosbeak, a beautiful male, which obligingly perched on the top of a small bush by the side of the road where we were able to clearly see and admire his lovely sapphire blue outfit, daubed with chocolate on the wings. Crossing one of the bridges two brown pelicans came sailing alongside the car and gave us an intimate look, and had no difficulty in keeping alongside without a flap of their wings.

When once again on peninsular Florida we headed westward towards the Everglades and eight miles from Florida City came to the Royal Palm Ranger station. The Park itself consists mainly of grasses and sedges dotted here and there by tree islands known as hammocks. The Ranger Station is located on Paradise Key, one of the most accessible of the hammocks. Around the station is a small park with parking space and conveniences for tourists while in front of it a trail has been laid out through the trees with signs pointing out the most interesting of the plant life. Here we saw royal palms, strangler fig, gumbo-limbo,

blolly and paradise trees as well as some air plants, ferns and orchids. A short distance away a boardwalk leads into a swamp where we got some intimate glimpses of alligators and a purple gallinule. From the Ranger Station a road leads down to Coots' Bay about twenty miles away; it was here we saw one of the strangest road signs: "Alligator Crossing". We learned later that alligators are often seen crossing the road at this point, especially in the early mornings and late evenings. About three-quarters of the way down mangroves began to appear and this marks the point of penetration of salt water into the Park. Coots' Bay itself is in the mangrove swamps and when we arrived a boat was just ready to leave for a turn around the channels. We were told we were unlikely to see any spoonbills as they were through nesting and had moved down to Bottle Key, so we elected to forgo the boat trip and drive down to Cape Sable a distance of seven or eight miles. The road from here on is mud and impassable when it rains but as they had not seen a downpour for five weeks they assured us we would have no difficulty getting there.

At Flamingo, which is at the end of the run, we got out and looked around the adjoining fields for Cape Sable seaside sparrows. Once again we saw sparrows but, as at Merritt Island, the glimpses were so brief we had no opportunity of noting any identifying mark. All we could see were light-coloured sparrows which seemed to pop up from nowhere and disappear almost immediately in the same. The field here was covered with a thick matting of dried grass which was as springy to walk on as a "Beauty Rest" mattress and was pitted with holes about an inch and a half in diameter every yard or so. A fleshy salicornia-like plant was growing through the matting, giving the field a greenish tinge. The sparrows seemed to spring up out of these holes and dive into them again. Although we encircled one spot and tramped all around the vicinity we could not flush the bird. After a few abortive attempts we gave up. The land here is very low and was hard hit by a hurricane a few years ago. Evidence of its destructive force was all around. A vulture sitting on top of a dead tree in the middle of this desolation made a fitting picture. Flamingo was a fishing village at the edge of Florida Bay but is now deserted, only a few wrecked houses standing on stilts remain, guarded by a few coconut palms standing like sentinels, their long fronds waving in the trade winds, like arms trying to drive away the evil spirits. On our way back to the station we saw two hawks sitting on a tree and stopped to investigate. They puzzled us for some time as they had very light bodies and almost white heads, and it was only when we flushed them and noted their banded tails that we knew they were Florida red-shouldered hawks. In the vicinity of Coots' Bay we also saw a swallow-tailed kite. Back at the Ranger Station we once again headed for the boardwalk into the swamp as we hoped to see more birds now that it was evening. Two males and a female purple gallinule were present, and as we stood still and watched, one of the males flew up to the boardwalk and walked along the railing almost onto John Sherrin's hand. A gar pike about a foot long swam into an inlet where a half-grown alligator was floating motionlessly. It was unwary enough to swim past the 'gator's mouth which suddenly opened and closed, and that was the end of the fish. A sora rail

fed along the edge of the reeds not fifteen feet away. To cap it all a king rail stalked out into the clear and proceeded to preen himself before retiring for the night. We were leaving as the sinking sun splashed the sky with red and orange when an anhinga flew by, flapping and sailing in its characteristic fashion and giving us our last look at "Anhinga Trail" and the Everglades National Park.

After stopping at Homestead for the night we set out at sunrise of April 19th and made our first stop near a lime orchard on the outskirts of the village to listen to cardinals, Carolina wrens, red-bellied woodpeckers and bobwhites, calling all around us. Making our way to the Tamiami Trail we travelled west for some distance before turning back towards Miami. While there was an occasional green and Louisiana heron and a few egrets along the banks of the canal bordering the road our observations were mostly pointed at the skies, where white ibises in small flocks were continuously flying over, making for feeding grounds to the north. In the farming country of central Florida we were surprised to note that all the cattle seen in the fields were "Brahmins" - a hump-backed breed imported from India, no doubt because they are able to stand heat and drought better than our northern breeds. Here also are many irrigation ditches lining the road, and at times we found ourselves travelling between carpets of pale blue where the flowers of the water hyacinth were in bloom. On our way to Lake Okeechobee just outside South Bay we came upon a whole field literally alive and seeming to boil over with the bubbling calls of thousands of bobolinks. They had to be seen and heard to be believed. This was one of the highlights to me for it was a sight and an experience which will long be remembered.

Clewiston provided us with an unique experience in the way of transportation: we took an airboat ride to Observation Island. While not recommended for good birding it is fast and ideal for getting into weed-choked marshes such as our present destination. Our guide was familiar with the haunt of the Everglade kite, and showed us where this rare North American bird had a nest in a thick island of bulrushes. While here we had some excellent views of three or four of these striking birds hunting around the marsh and diving for the large ampullia snails which are its sole item of diet. We saw a trampled area in the marsh with a hammock of cattail roots in the centre of which, we were told, was a "table" for the birds, and where a number of empty snail shells testified to the fact. Our guide informed us that there were only about twelve of the Everglade kites left in this vicinity and that this was their last stand in the United States. All around us in the marsh were what looked like clusters of snowy white berries fastened to the sedges and reeds. On close examination they turned out to be eggs of the ampullia snails. The wailing cry of a limpkin broke the silence around us, the hidden bird probably protesting at our presence. Limpkins, herons and egrets flew up as we moved around the marsh and large numbers of coots and gallinules scurried out of our way with a wild beating of wings and churning of water. On our way back we went at slow speed through a canal and had a splendid view of a limpkin

standing quietly under a bush along the bank.

Clewiston is ornithologically famous as the home of the smooth-billed ani, and after a good night's rest, we started out at sunrise, April 20th, on our quest for this bird. A run up on the dyke protecting the town brought an unexpected sight; as we breasted the rise two birds which were resting on the ground flew up and Derek Beacham immediately identified them as gull-billed terns. The birds cruised over some bushes on the town side of the dyke and as one dived down we watched it and saw it come up with something in its bill. Fortunately it flew towards us making for the lake and as it came close we were surprised to note that the victim was a lizard. Then, to our amazement, the bird dropped its catch three or four times, each time catching it again before it had fallen more than three feet. Whether this was a game the bird was playing or whether the lizard actually wriggled out of its bill, we could not tell. After this experience we went back towards town and had not driven more than two hundred yards from the dyke when John Sherrin saw the bird we were after. Sitting on a telephone wire by the side of the road was a smooth-billed ani. As we drew up and got out another ani flew and sat by the side of the first, their long loose tails continually waving back and forth to help keep their balance. These birds are a South American species and belong to the cuckoo family but when perched they sit upright and look very much like an untidy black parrot. Two other anis were seen feeding on the ground in the company of some boat-tailed grackles.

Well satisfied with our stop at Clewiston we headed out and up the west side of Lake Okeechobee where we found the most prolific birding of our whole trip. One of the highlights was when we pulled up at a small slough full of birds. As we got out of the car a caracara, which we had seen start up from a nearby field came flying by so close that we were able to see all the characteristics of this odd bird. Then, turning our attention to the slough, we were presented with an amazing picture. Here in a small wet spot about the size of an oversized city backyard were wood, white and glossy ibises, American and snowy egrets, Louisiana and little blue herons, black-necked stilts and lesser yellowlegs. Where outside of a Zoo could you find such a congested combination of lovely birds? It was our first sight of glossy ibises and we found them strikingly handsome, their rich chestnut colour seemingly alive with splashes of green and purple as they moved about probing the soft mud with their long curved bills. In another field we saw hundreds of wood and white ibises with some glossy among them, while along the bank of a small stream we turned our attention on a limpkin with a small clam in its bill. We were curious to see how the bird broke open the shell but unfortunately he took exception to our staring and walked off to a more secluded spot to consume his meal. We were watching twelve black-necked stilts feeding at yet another slough when a flock of dowitchers flew in. We immediately transferred our attention from the stilts to the dowitchers as they were the first we had seen on the trip. We found they were mostly males in rich

reddish-brown spring outfits, and were accompanied by a few least sandpipers.

After lunch at the hotel in Okeechobee we came out to see a carload of Seminole Indians who had come in for some shopping. The women were all decked out in their many-coloured dresses and eating ice cream cones. Then came a couple of hours crusing around the flat country to the north of the town in search of sandhill cranes, a search which was fruitless. Turning down a dirt road leading to the Kissimee River we hoped to get some burrowing owls. Suddenly, before we had proceeded very far, John Sherrin quietly asked if we wanted to see a crane and pointed ahead. There, walking along the road ahead of us, was a sandhill crane. When we drew up close to him he walked off to one side, sedately picking his way among the saw palmettoes which covered the ground and when some distance away took wing. Burrowing owls were common here and we had some excellent close-ups of them as they perched on posts or mounds of earth by the side of the road. Working our way back to Okeechobee we came to Chandlers' Slough where we saw a tree which appeared to be in full bloom with large white flowers. Looking through our binoculars the flowers turned out to be egrets having an afternoon siesta. We stopped here, and while the other boys took a walk into the woods where they found a large flock of wood ibises feeding in a wet spot among the trees, we elected to stay behind. At a spot where the banks of a small stream was piled with water hyacinth which some fishermen had pulled out of the water, we found a number of young grasshoppers. They could only hop around as they had not attained their wings as yet, but were about one and a half to two inches long and were jet black and strikingly marked with yellow.

From Okeechobee we turned north and at Avon Park saw some jacuelanda trees in flower, whilst a run into Highland Hammock rewarded us with a beautiful picture of a southern swamp where tall cypresses heavily hung with Spanish moss, formed a dark background from which a quiet stream meandered out past light green tupelo trees standing in the water. In the foreground yellow and white lily pads floated serenely on the dark water. While at breakfast at Haines City, April 21st, we saw a tree with some beautiful flowers just across the road. John Sherrin the only botanically inclined one of the party, informed us that it was an orchid tree. After eating we went out to examine the flowers and add them to the many recollections of beautiful things seen along the way. Near Fellowship we stopped at a promising looking woods. The road was lined with blue-eyed grass in flower and when we went in among the trees we saw summer tanagers, a worm-eating warbler and a pair of tufted titmice.

After crossing into Georgia we drove to Fargo, where, over an old wooden bridge, we crossed the famous Suwannee River as it flows out of Okefenokee Swamp on its long journey to the Gulf of Mexico. Inquiring after lodgings we were directed to a mud road which led into the swamp where we would find some fishing camps. For days we

had been on the watch for the red-cockaded woodpecker whenever we had been anywhere near pines, but so far had had no success. Going down this Georgia side road John Sherrin, who was driving at the time, suddenly pulled to a halt and pointed; there not fifteen feet away and not six feet up on a small pine was our bird, giving us an excellent view of its ladder back. This bird was a female, lacking the red feathers over and behind the eye which gives the species its name, but we were glad to add it to our ever growing list.

We located on the banks of the Suwannee at Lem Griffis' Camp and found him to be a native of the country, a good naturalist, a fine guide, and the teller of the tallest tales this side of Texas. Around the camp Carolina wrens, parula and prothonotary warblers were common. While down at the boat landing we saw our first brownheaded nuthatch and soon after discovered its nest about thirty-five feet up on a dead pine. Both parents were in attendance at the nest and from the persistent visits they paid to it we gathered that the brood was nearly full grown. As it grew dark we heard a Chuck-will's-widow calling from the direction of the river. Looking in the direction from which the call came we saw our bird flying along the lane leading down to the water. Next morning John Cromer reported that one of these birds was calling from the ridgepole of the cabin all night and had kept him awake, but we must confess that we slept through all this. After breakfast on April 22nd, with Lem Griffis as guide, we went in a boat up the Suwannee. As we pulled away from the bank the morning sun burnished the ripples on the brown waters of the river and made it appear like a stream of molten gold. The Indians called the Suwannee, the "River of Reeds". To those whose impressions of it are based on Stephen Foster's song it must appear placid and bounded by cotton fields and hugh mansions, but here, where it begins in the Okefenokee Swamp, it is a rushing stream, lined by tupelo trees with some huge buttresses of cypress, blackened with age, still standing out of the water and bearing mute testimony to the vast forest of these trees which once dominated the landscape. Only in one or two spots here were the banks visible but for the most part they were lost in the tangle of trees growing out of the water. Near the camp we passed a few boatloads of fishermen sitting silently with their bamboo poles sticking out from the boats like spokes from a wheel, patiently waiting for bites from warmouth, stumpknocker, sandflirter, or the more familiar large-mouthed bass. While the whole swamp is full of large fish, we learned that the Okefenokee also shelters one of the tiniest fish in the world, the rain-water fish, Leptolucania ammata. Occasionally American egrets, great blue and little blue herons flapped off at our approach, while at one place an alligator jumped from a log where it was sunning itself and disappeared with a big splash. Gradually as we got further into the swamp, cypress trees, hung with Spanish moss, became more numerous and then turning a bend we came out in a clearing where the trees grew back and fields of pale green "Maiden's Crane" edged the water. Though lacking in floral distinction we learned that its green abundance plays an important part in the

ecology of the swamp where its yard high stems and leaves shelter the least bittern, the swamp rat and the Florida water rat. In late summer it plays host to swarms of katydids which fly out and astonish the intruder by plunging into the water and disappearing. These diving katydids belong to a peculiar species first described from the Okefenokee. But of these creatures we saw nothing. The chugging of the outboard motor only alarmed some blackcrowned night herons which flew off in squawking protest at our presence. After going about eight miles up the river to about two miles from Billy's Lake we turned around and drifted back with the strong current, enjoying in silence the strange beauty of our surroundings. With the motor quiet we could hear prothonotary warblers singing continuously from the trees on both sides of the river. Indeed, the prothonotary was the most common bird, its numbers far exceeding that of all other species put together. When once again at the landing, we took a stroll into the woods and following the call of a pileated woodpecker, managed to get an excellent close-up view of the bird.

Reluctantly we left this delightful spot after lunch and made our way to the Okefenokee State Park, which is worth a visit for its scenery and botanical display. Once inside we went immediately to the boardwalk where we passed from sparkling sunshine into the gloom of a cypress bay. Here was a region of twilight, a twilight flecked with green made by the sun shining through a canopy of fine pale green leaves of cypress. The huge trees, seventy to eighty feet tall, buttressed by "knees" through which they are said to breathe, stood in close tanks in a foot or so of water. Away from the walk in many places tall dense undergrowth shut out the surroundings and here, according to one authority "hoorah bushes", sweet gallberries and other shrubs are interlaced with the thorny vines of "bamboo" or smilax. In some open glades white and yellow pond lilies and pickerel weed showed familiar faces, while water shield and floating heart covered the water. Tall stems of yelloweyed grass, "Paintroot", and the dark green blades of the bog torch or "Never-wets" sway in the breeze. We climbed the seventy-five foot tower at the end of the boardwalk after a great deal of puffing and looked out over a dense forest of green, threaded here and there with the thin silver of waterways. These narrow waterways are the roads of the swamp and one of the attractions at the Park is a boat ride a little distance along them. In the boat is a young guide who speels off some of the interesting items along the way. A young alligator swam across our path as we leisurely chugged our way along and a pileated woodpecker called from somewhere in the depths of the trees. The guide seeing our interest in the call informed us that it was the voice of the "Yellowhammer". He also told us that the water was stained brown from the leachings of the cypress trees which also sterilize it, and make it safe for drinking. Most remarkable was the fact that there are no mosquitoes in the swamp, since the leachings of the cypress also make the water uninhabitable for their larvae. Of the swamp's twenty species of frogs we didn't see one, but all around us we could hear a chirping like a cricket, which, we were

informed, was the voice of the "Rain Frog" but which we suspect was that of a tree cricket frog.

Spending the night in a motel just outside Way Cross, we started out at sunrise on April 23rd for Augusta where, following Pettingill's directions, we had no difficulty in finding "Lover's Lane". This was a delightful birding spot with wet and dry woods bordering the road and bird songs numerous. Our difficulty was in finding the lively songsters in the thick mat of leaves overhead. Following a strange song patiently, Derek Beacham finally located a Kentucky warbler and by quietly waiting we were able to obtain a fine view of the songster. While parula warblers were common we considered ourselves fortunate to find a pair at their nest hidden away in some Spanish moss in a pine tree. Along this road indigo and painted buntings, blue grosbeaks, yellowthroated warblers and white-eyed vireos were numerous but time was fleeting and we had to keep moving. Leaving Augusta and its pleasant memories behind we went along Route 25 to Newbury, S.C. where we spent a very warm night in a hotel.

The morning of April 24th dawned hot and we were glad to get moving once again. The road was not too interesting as we were passing a lot of construction work, but after being without robins now for over a week we were glad to see one at Carlyle, S.C. It started to rain at Greensboro and continued for the rest of the day. Starting out the day with hot brilliant sunshine we finished it in gloomy, chilly weather at Charlottesville, Va., where we dived for our red flannels as soon as we were in the motel. We had scheduled our return trip along the Blue Ridge Mountain Trail, but when we woke on the morning of April 25th it was still raining, and the distant mountain tops were clothed in clouds. Driving up there would be hazardous, so we changed our plans and headed for home along the lower road. The rain falling in an interminable screen shut out the distances and drew in the mountains and trees, their valleys draped with long streamers of mist, and in the foreground patterns of white and mauve which were dogwood and redbud trees in flower. All day it rained and we were glad to go to bed that night in a motel near Painted Post just inside the New York State border. It was misty when we woke on April 26th, and stayed that way for more than seventy miles while we wound through the hills. At last came welcome sunlight as we were approaching the Canadian border, and summerlike weather by the time we reached Toronto, but with trees only just starting to burst their winter buds and clothe themselves in a mantle of green. After just over two weeks and four thousand five hundred miles of travel we were home again!

A journey of any distance is only made enjoyable by agreeable companions: I could not ask for better ones. I am indebted to Derek Beacham in whose car we made the journey and who, together with John Sherrin first saw and identified many of the new birds along the way. Looking back on this trip we can recommend it to anyone

like-minded but we would warn them that the constitution of a bear and nerves of iron are necessary qualifications if the trip must have a time limit such as ours. For me the trip produced fifty new species of birds out of a total of one hundred and eighty three species seen, and had been in the nature of a huge picture book. Each day we turned over pages and looked at different, brilliantly coloured scenes, each full of beauty, life and interest.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Bird Migrants. Some aspects and observations. By Eric Simms. With 20 photographs by Eric Hosking. Clever-Hume Press Ltd., London 1952 Pp. 212 (In Canada, Burns and MacEachran, Publishers, Price \$3.50)

This is an eminently readable summary, by one of the leading young British ornithologists of the up to date views of British and some foreign ornithologists on the ever-interesting, always moot question of the whys and wherefores of bird migration. Chapters are devoted to the complex pattern of migration, to the means by which birds determine their routes of travel, to night and day movements, to the question of migration on broad and/or narrow fronts, and to the importance of local physiographic features in affecting inland migration. Of these various points of discussion the last two represent the author's most original and personal work. He has contributed notably to a clarification of the concept of "route" as used by ornithologists. Although this book is essentially British in its emphasis, the argument is couched in such general terms that it will prove very stimulating to bird watchers everywhere. Particularly worthwhile are the suggestions offered by the author to fellow field naturalists as to ways of pursuing this fascinating aspect of bird study. The stress throughout is upon the value of accurate field observations. The recent cooperative studies of hawk migration carried out in Ontario under the auspices of the F.O.N. are one example of the type of field work which Mr. Simms regards as of prime value. It is unfortunate that, in a book otherwise so worthwhile, there should be so little mention of the very significant migrational studies made in this century in Germany, Scandinavia and America. Despite this limitation, this is a book that will prove a valuable addition to any thoughtful bird watcher's library.

Up the Missouri with Audubon. The Journal of Edward Harris

Ed. J.F. McDermott. University of Oklahoma Press, 1951 Pp. XV, 222. (In Canada, Burns and MacEachran, Publishers. Price \$5.00)

More than a hundred years ago, in 1843, John James Audubon made a trip up the Missouri as far as the Yellowstone River for

the purpose of collecting and studying birds, and just for the fun of seeing this new, exciting country. Audubon's impressions are to be found in his Journals, the Ornithological Biography, and, of course, in his paintings. One of Audubon's companions on this hazardous trip was Edward Harris, close friend and valued patron, a gentleman farmer from Moorestown, New Jersey. Harris also kept a diary of their adventures and it is this diary which is presented here. Introduced by a scholarly, 40 page commentary which includes some amusing and informative excerpts from Harris' correspondence, this journal forms not only a valuable addendum to Audubon's own account, but in its own right, gives a very interesting indication of life in the raw new West. Housewives reading its pages will fasten on the list of food prices at St. Louis, and goggle when they read "Beef, 3 to 4 cents (a lb.); veal, the same; pork, 2 cents...potatoes 10 cents a bushel..." Naturalists will get a vivid insight into what happened to the buffalo, and to so many other creatures. Harris had the grace to be ashamed of his first slaughter of buffalo, but, as he says, he soon got over it. Here is the West as it was both in the United States and Canada in the days when all nature was believed unlimited, and a quick finger on the trigger was the only way to command respect. It will be worth reading a journal like this just to find out where some of the ideas and prejudices naturalists are still fighting come from. This is our own background. We should know it. One thing you cannot fail to be impressed by is the difference between studying birds and the wild creatures in the days of the binocular and the camera from those days of the shotgun and the rifle. After perusing Harris' pages and thinking of the changes, we might almost believe in progress.

Mexican Birds. First Impressions. By George Miksch Sutton. Illustrated with water-colour and pen-and-ink drawings by the author. University of Oklahoma Press, 1951 Pp. XV, 282 (In Canada, Burns and MacEachran, Publishers, Price \$12.50).

George Sutton is one of America's best known ornithologists; a careful student of birds he is at the same time a top-rank bird painter, and a popular lecturer of great wit and charm who has held audiences all over this continent, including Toronto, in rapt attention. He is well-known to Canadians for his books, Birds in the Wilderness, Eskimo Year and The Exploration of Southampton Island, Hudson Bay, all dealing with his experiences in the Canadian northland. Some of his best paintings are reproduced in Todd's Birds of Western Pennsylvania; Allen's American Bird Biographies, and Roberts Birds of Minnesota. For several years now Sutton has been especially concerned with an exploration of the birds of Mexico. His visits to Mexico have resulted in a series of magnificent paintings, a large group of which were on display in Toronto at one time. In this book he gives us, as he says, his "first impressions" of birding in the land south of the Rio Grande, believing that in so doing he is presenting his freshest, and in many ways, most accurate views of Mexican birds. However that may be, here is George Sutton, the popular lecturer talking about

birds just as he talks on the platform. In these pages, as from the platform, he charms his audience. He lures you on from page to page, makes you think you are really there, down among the motmots and the trogons. And to top it off he puts in some beautiful paintings. The 16 colour plates are superbly reproduced with the colours soft and true, the lines clear and sharp, but from the point of view of popular appeal it would have been better to have made a less strictly scientific selection of paintings. And since Sutton's collection of Mexican bird paintings includes many of wide popular interest it is difficult to know why a somewhat different selection was not made. This very attractive book ends with an appendix, listing and briefly describing all Mexican species. It is not, however, as the author is careful to point out, a guidebook to Mexican birds, but a story of his experiences and impressions. Any bird watcher going to Mexico for the winter, and even one staying at home, would appreciate this book as a gift under the Christmas tree.

R. M. Saunders,

Editor.