

wonderful *lepidopterous* scavenger, have been added to scientific knowledge.—A. J. CAMPBELL, F.A.O.U., Box Hill, Vic.

Reviews

["Willis Island."—A Storm Warning Station in the Coral Sea, by John King Davis, F.R.G.S., author of "With the *Aurora* in the Antarctic," Director of Navigation for the Commonwealth of Australia. With an Introductory Chapter by Griffith Taylor, D.Sc., B.E., B.A., with 37 photographs and 12 maps and line drawings. Critchley Parker, Melbourne, 376 Flinders-lane; 1923.]

This small but important work is a record of simple facts, written in a breezy style. It is historical, reminiscent and informative.

Willis Island is 250 miles off the coast of North-eastern Queensland. To this isolated spot Capt. Davis set out with 15 willing assistants to form a meteorological station, and did it in six months. He incidentally established an ornithological observing station, and was the first bird observer there. In the appendix, "Short Notes on Birds frequenting Willis Island" are given, while such notes as the following are taken from the body of the work:—

March 22nd (1922).—The Noddies are here in great numbers. This is the nesting season. They perch on the bushes, which have now grown to a height of 3½ feet. Some are busy transporting shells, bits of dry coral, grass, etc., as material for the nests; others remain perched on the bushes—superintending! During the afternoon the greater number settle on the beach, leaving only a few nest-builders at work.

March 24th.—The Terns keep up a ceaseless chatter on quiet nights. At times, it is difficult to get to sleep with such a din.

April 2nd.—The whole island is littered with nests and eggs, those of the Noddies being the most numerous.

April 4th.—I found the nests of some fresh arrivals, Crested Terns (*Sterna bergi*). The Sooty Terns are mustering in great force during the nesting season.

April 8th.—The following birds are nesting at present:—White Masked Gannet, Red-legged Gannet, Terns, Noddies, Crested Terns, and Brown Gannets. The birds are the attraction here, although the ceaseless screaming is not "an added charm," but it is a real pleasure to see the wild bird in its natural environment and to see the means provided by Nature to enable the young to reach maturity.

April 9th.—I have just returned (9 p.m.) from a moonlight walk round the beach. On the northern side of the island it was just black with birds. There must have been some thousands.

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["How to Study Birds: A Practical Guide for Amateur Bird Lovers and Camera-Hunters," by Herbert K. Job, Member of the American Ornithologists' Union, etc. Published by The Macmillan Company, New York].

This useful and interesting volume, from the pen of an author already well-known to Nature-lovers, is a striking indication of the trend of modern bird-observation. In its pages we find a

judicious admixture of pleasant anecdote and practical instruction in the art of hunting harmlessly, while, as a statement of the aims and views of a popular bird-student, the opening chapter is especially worth reading. Other chapters are devoted to the identification of wild birds, to their songs and to the subject of migration.

The author has made the fullest use of the photographic method of popularising his subject, and the sixty excellent pictures which illustrate the book are obviously the result of much patient and painstaking work. The advice given in the chapters which deal with bird photography is both explicit and sound.

The volume is handy in size, well bound in cloth, and contains 270 pages. Our copy is from Messrs. Angus and Robertson Ltd., Castlereagh-st., Sydney. The price is 8s., post free.

Conversazione

It may be true that good wine needs no bush, but it is equally true that judicious advertising is often desirable. This was strikingly shown in the record attendance at the *Conversazione* at the National Museum, Melbourne, on March 11th. A well-written paragraph in the daily papers drew folk in embarrassing numbers, and when the seating accommodation was engaged fully half the number had to remain standing. Amongst those who succumbed to the attraction of the bill of fare, "Bird-life in Central Australia," were His Excellency the Governor, Lady Stradbroke, and a large party from Government House.

Mr. A. G. Campbell began by giving a synopsis of the work done by successive exploring expeditions in Central Australia, which geographical term was taken to include all the interior of the continent, with a rainfall of less than 10 inches annually. He made good use of a series of maps, and, as the lecture proceeded, one began to get a clearer conception of the conditions prevailing, and to realise against what tremendous odds Stuart, Eyre, Giles and the other explorers pitted themselves.

Mr. A. J. Campbell, who followed, lost little time in indicating the nature and extent of the bird-life of the region under review. Lying on the table before him were specimens of many birds taken by the recent H. L. White Expedition under F. Lawson Whitlock, the well-known field ornithologist, and the oral description was supplemented by the exhibition of the bird itself.

Finishing his talk sooner than his auditors would have desired, Mr. Campbell introduced Mr. Keartland, who enjoys the distinction of having been a member of several of these exploring expeditions, in one of which two men and several camels perished under the strain of the privations endured. The audience listened with eager interest as the speaker recalled some of his experiences. These were not all of a sombre character. Mr. Keartland's racy, graphic, and often humorous descriptions served to bring the fascinating interior much nearer to us. He, too, made good use of the specimens available.