

Reviews

[Australian Finches in Bush and Aviary. By Neville W. Cayley, F.R.Z.S., R.A.O.U. Published by Angus & Robertson Ltd., Sydney. xviii + 251. Price, 12/6.]

Comparison is a sound basis for review, and in the recent *What Bird is That?*, by the same author, one has a criterion to which to refer readers and upon which to judge the relative merits of "Australian Finches." The advantages that the new publication (the first Australian book on aviculture) possesses are the inclusion of more intimate details of the species it deals with, a special group of charming birds, treated in a special manner, and, which is most important, plates that give much greater scope to the author-artist's ability. A few species only are included on each plate, and these, in some cases therefore nearly natural size, are faithful reproductions of the birds they represent. Natural backgrounds set off the birds and help to make the plates very attractive.

The nomenclature of the *Systema Avium Australasianarum* has been adopted almost without exception; it is suggested that without giving an extensive synonymy a reference to the Checklist name might nevertheless well have been included for the convenience of Australians. *Steganopleura annulosa* and *Alisteranus* = *Poëphila atropygialis* are relegated to sub-species of *S. bichenovii* and *A. cincta* respectively. Under Zebra Finch reference is made to *Donacola flaviprymna* apparently far out of its range. It is gratifying to note whilst speaking of this last species that commonsense has overcome the ornithological modesty that converted "rump" to "tail" and "belly" to "breast" in so many trivial names in the Checklist and that *D. flaviprymna* is referred to as the Yellow-rumped Finch, as it should be, and not as the Yellow-tailed Finch.

The general scheme of dealing with each bird is to follow the references with a description of both sexes, distribution, field notes (and these often include the personal notes of the author—a valuable part of any bird book), aviary notes, and notes on hybrids. References to sub-species are included. It will thus be seen that in these comprehensive chapters there is included something for both the field-worker and the aviculturist. Distribution maps show at a glance where the birds occur—these might, of course, need a little revision as time passes. The aviary notes (including excerpts from the works of well-known aviculturists) are succinct and entertaining. They illustrate virtues or traits of the various birds which are best seen in the case of birds in captivity—the spitefulness of the Crimson Finch, the fecundity of the Zebra, the fact that the Chestnut-breasted

Finch sleeps in the nest. The suggestion in the foreword by Dr. L. J. Clendinnen, R.A.O.U., however, that aviculture might perpetuate species in danger of extinction probably needs practical proof so far as Australian species are concerned, and is at present more in the nature of a potentiality than a fact.

Chapters on bird ailments and their treatment should be of great value to bird-fanciers. The sections dealing with hybrids are interesting, although, generally speaking, breeding hybrids is perhaps more entertaining than of scientific value. It is of interest in this connection to observe how the virile Zebra Finch is predominant in most of the crosses to which it is a party. Photographs of nests and birds by well-known photographers, and of aviaries, together with plans of bird-houses, all help to complete a very interesting and apparently much-needed (especially from the avicultural point of view) handbook.—C.E.B.

Library Notes

The receipt is acknowledged of the following additions to the Library:—

Annals of the Transvaal Museum, Vol. XIV., Part IV.

The Auk, Vol. XLIX., No. 3. [A note is included of the purchase by America of Lord Rothschild's Tring Collection of about 280,000 specimens, "including approximately 50,000 Australian specimens, which had formed the basis for the monograph of Mathews".]

The Condor, Vol. XXXIV., No. 4.

The South Australian Ornithologist, Vol. XI., Part 7. Contains "The Rudimentary Wing-spur in Birds," by A. M. Morgan. [Fully-developed spurs in two Australian forms—*Lobibyx miles* and *L. novæ-hollandiæ*—and in several foreign birds. Rudiments in all birds examined, except Penguins, Emu, Cassowary, and Kiwi—particularly well-marked in *Charadriiformes*.] "Wedgebill," by J. Neil McGilp. [Reference made to unclassified eggs taken in Victorian mallee, which bear resemblance to Wedgebill eggs. More information has been gathered concerning the eggs and the birds that laid them than Mr. McGilp allows credit for, the actual "discoverers" being loath, however, to put their notes into print until more definite data available.]

The Victorian Naturalist, Vol. XLIX, Nos. 3, 4, and 5.

Australian Science Abstracts, Vol. 11, No. 3.

The Avicultural Magazine, Nos. 6, 7, and 8. No. 8 contains "Notes on the breeding of the Zebra Finch," by H. Jones, with colour plate by Neville W. Cayley.

Boletín del Ministerio de Agricultura de la Nación, Vol. XXX., Nos. 3 and 4.