

REVIEWS

AUDUBON WESTERN BIRD GUIDE. By RICHARD H. POUGH.
Doubleday. New York. \$4.95.

Under the auspices of the Audubon Society Mr. Pough has prepared a guide to the birds of Western North America—from Mexico to the Arctic. The work is illustrated with a number of line drawings and thirty-two coloured plates which should greatly facilitate identification. There are also useful hints on field characters with short notes on habits, which have been extended for some of the more interesting birds. Owing to the great variety of types of country and differences in climate as compared with eastern America a greater number of species and genera are found within the area. The cold currents from the Arctic carry an abundance of plankton down the coastal shelf and this attracts many petrels and albatrosses, indeed no fewer than six species of the latter have been recorded. Some come north from their breeding grounds in the sub-antarctic, while others breed in certain Pacific islands where their status is not always very satisfactory owing to Japanese feather hunters and the effects of the last war.

That magnificent bird the Californian Condor still holds its own in small numbers in the southern parts of the coastal mountains. Other large birds of prey are the Bald Eagle—the national bird—Steller's Sea Eagle—reported from Alaska—and the Golden Eagle, much hunted with aeroplanes in sheep districts. In contradistinction to these large birds there are the humming birds and one, Heloise's, is only two and a half inches long, the smallest bird in the world except for the Bee Humming Bird of Cuba. Mr. Pough does not give its weight, but the Calliope, half an inch larger, weighs only 0.09 oz. That this last species and the Rufous Humming Bird should yearly travel twice from Northern Canada to Mexico shows that size has little to do with the distance birds travel. But though we may marvel at these journeys they are nothing compared with that undertaken by the Bristle-thighed Curlew which carries out a flight of 6,000 miles from Alaska to New Caledonia. In Laysan, where it passes through on migration, it has been observed to feed on other birds' eggs, this corvine habit it shares with the Ruddy Turnstone, better known to us as the Common Turnstone!

There is a wonderful variety of woodpeckers, some feed on acorns, others called sapsuckers drill holes in the bark of trees to get at the cambium or inner layer. The birds we know as warblers are represented by only one or two species, but there

are numerous American warblers belonging to quite a different family—the Mniotiltidae, a large assembly of birds differing much in colour and habits from our warblers.

Though the common house sparrow was introduced long ago and is now widely spread, there are also many types of American sparrows and juncos belonging to the Fringillidae, but more nearly related to the buntings than the true finches.

In spite of the small space allotted to habits Mr. Pough has managed to give us much interesting information which adds to the interest of the book.

N. B. K.

SOME COMMON AUSTRALIAN BIRDS.

BY ALAN and SHIRLEY BELL. Oxford University Press. 1956. 35s.

This book purports to simplify the identification of about 100 common Australian birds. Brief and chatty information is given on the left of each two pages, and a coloured picture of the corresponding species on the right. It is doubtful, in the case of many species, whether the book will achieve its aim. The illustrations must be amongst the most inaccurate ever published of Australian birds. Much space has been wasted throughout the book. Most pages of letterpress are only partly filled, and often a whole page contains only one small figure. It is astonishing, when we consider the high costs of modern production that a book of such meagre virtue ever found a publisher.

A. J. M.

ÉCOLOGIE, BIOLOGIE ET SYSTÉMATIQUE DES CHEIROPTÈRES.
Par JACQUES VERSCHUREN (Bruxelles). Exploration du Parc National de la Garamba. Fascicule 7. Bruxelles, 1957. (In French), 478 pp., 178 figs. (photographs, sketches, diagrams, charts, tables, maps); 2 col. plates (1 page); map. Obtainable from: l'Institut des Parcs Nationaux du Congo Belge, 21, rue Montoyer, Brussels, Belgium. Price 900 Belgian francs.

This text-book, devoted to the mammalian order Chiroptera—Bats—and based on the researches of the scientific investigators enumerated on the title page in a small area of N.E. Belgian Congo, is of the high standard which has always been associated with the publications of the Institut des Parcs Nationaux du