

REVIEW.

Birds of Britain. By J. Lewis Bonhote, M.A., F.L.S., F.Z.S., M.B.O.U. With 100 illustrations in colour, selected by H. E. Dresser from his "Birds of Europe." xii. + 405 pp. A. & C. Black. £1 net.

IN judging this book it is only fair to consider first for what object it was written. There is nothing novel either in its form or matter, and the author has evidently spent little time over it, since much of the ordinary information is incomplete and out-of-date. A few examples will suffice:—The Orphean Warbler has been recorded four times instead of twice; the Barred Warbler two "dozen" rather than a "dozen" times; the sexes in the Dartford Warbler cannot be correctly described as being alike; the Siskin is a well-known breeding species in many parts of Ireland, and is not practically confined to Scotland. There are many such mistakes and omissions through the book. Mr. Bonhote's "English" is not always quite clear. Here is a sentence:—"These so-called 'cocks' nests' are used, however, as roosting-places, and if the eggs be destroyed, *they* may be lined and used as *their* home for a second clutch." And this is another:—"Their food consists of worms, slugs, snails and *other* insects, as well as grain and seeds, so that *it* is practically omnivorous." (The italics are not the author's.)

We cannot accuse Mr. Bonhote of having undertaken this work for the sake of telling us what he knows of our birds, for we have no doubt at all that he knows much more than he here pretends. We must therefore fall back upon the coloured plates as the *raison d'être* of the book. As far as they go they are, in the main, satisfactory. Many of them are excellent reproductions of Mr. Keuleman's originals; some, as one might expect, are unsatisfactory, such as the Mistle Thrush, Robin, and Moorhen; while others are bad, such as Leach's Petrel, which, by the way, is incorrectly lettered as the left-hand figure in the plate. They seem to have been "selected" with a view to their falling evenly through the book,—at least we can discover no other basis for the selection. If we ask why the Blue-headed Wagtail has been chosen instead of the typical British Yellow Wagtail, the Mealy instead of the Lesser Redpoll, and are told that it is more useful to illustrate the less well-known species, then why was not the Siskin figured rather than the Greenfinch, or the Wood-Lark rather than the Sky-Lark? There seems no good purpose in producing yet another book on British birds which has as its sole novelty coloured representations of only one hundred and eight species.