

## REVIEWS.

*More Birds of the Day.* By Eric Hosking and Cyril Newberry. (Collins, London, 1946). 12s 6d. net.

The great popularity of the authors' *Birds of the Day* has led them to follow this up with a sequel providing a no less admirable picture gallery of British birds than the first. It has become almost superfluous in a review to praise the excellence of Messrs. Hosking's and Newberry's photographs and these are as good as ever. The 33 species illustrated are a well-mixed assortment of birds common and rare, including Rook, Twite, Crested Tit, Willow-Tit, Nightingale, Ring-Ouzel, Wryneck, Kingfisher, Hobby, Montagu's Harrier, Heron, Slavonian Grebe, Curlew, Stone-Curlew and Lapwing, to take a fair selection. There is also an excellent sequence illustrating the ejection of eggs from a Tree-Pipit's nest by a young Cuckoo and the interesting Slavonian Grebe series, including several striking postures of breeding birds, also deserves special mention: most of these last, but not all, have appeared previously in *British Birds* (Vol. xxxiii, pp. 170-173). To the numerous other photographs space does not permit reference in detail, but, speaking merely as a layman in photographic matters, we like particularly the rendering of the sober yet intricate pattern of the Wryneck's plumage, while the portrait of the Willow-Tit seems to us less successful than most: it does not bring out the special characteristics of the species to advantage. Another point, though a small one, which struck us in looking through the illustrations is that it is a pity that the photographs of several species of duck at the nest could not have been accompanied by others of the handsome and distinctive drakes.

As in all such books, the letterpress is subsidiary to the pictures, but the text is pleasantly written and informative at the popular level intended.

*Bird Life in two Deltas.* By G. K. Yeates. (Faber & Faber, Ltd., London, 1946) 15s. net.

In this book Mr. Yeates describes three trips to Southern Europe for the purpose of bird photography, one to Andalusia in company with the reviewer and Mr. H. J. R. Pease and two to the Camargue and its vicinity. The account takes the form of a transcript from the author's diaries, "altered only where the clipped style and the ungrammatical sentence of the diary would . . . have been irritating." The result is an extremely readable, interesting and entertaining book. It has all the vividness of the good field diary, which descriptions written up later seldom wholly recapture, as well as the minor shortcomings—as a permanent record—of accounts actually written during the course of a field trip. However, the minor slips which are inevitable under such conditions and the conclusions which access to sources of information not available at the time will modify, are in this case neither numerous nor of much importance, though it would have been worth the trouble to check and correct the spelling of some of the names of places and people.

Mr. Yeates has the gift of vivid description and the account of his experiences in the deltas of the Guadalquivir and the Rhône will raise pleasant memories in the minds of those who have visited these ornithological paradises and will fill many who have not had that good fortune with a desire to do so. The general character and "atmosphere" of the two regions are very successfully conveyed without technical details and the description of the day to day events—sometimes vexatious and often comic—incidental to bird trips in out-of-the-way places contributes to the lively and personal quality of the narrative, which will probably make these famous bird haunts more real to those who have not seen them than more elaborate and methodical accounts. The reader can share in some measure the author's thrill at the first sight of a flock of Flamingoes or of Black-winged Stilts from the hide or his exasperation at the "unspeakable mistral" tearing over the levels of the Camargue.

As we should expect in a book by Mr. Yeates the pictorial results of his expeditions are well represented by a series of outstanding photographs, including such notable species as Griffon Vulture, Subalpine, Spectacled and Fan-tailed Warblers, Penduline Tit, Hoopoe, Buff-backed and Night Herons and Little Egret. Altogether this is a first-rate book of its kind and might well stimulate the most stay-at-home ornithologist with a desire to widen his experience abroad.

*Bird Haunts in Southern England.* By G. K. Yeates. (Faber & Faber, Ltd., London, 1947). 15s. net.

In his latest book Mr. Yeates comes back, as it were, from the spectacular bird haunts of Southern Europe to the more homely charms of Southern England and its bird-life. Beginning with the Norfolk Broads, with their harriers, Bitterns and Bearded Tits—at any rate as gentle a transition from the Camargue as Great Britain can afford—he goes on to write of Crossbills on the Breck and Hobbies on Salisbury Plain, of the birds, both common and rare, of the heaths, pastures and woods of the south-west of England, and then of two more sharply characterized regions of the west, Sedgemoor and Exmoor.

This is not a systematic treatise and does not set out to be: it is a series of readable and pleasant sketches of the bird-life of several of the more interesting parts of Southern England, as the author has come to know it in the course of his experience as a photographer and observer of birds. The final chapter stands somewhat apart from the others and describes on a lighter note—not that any of the book is heavy—the successful accomplishment in an interval of military duties of "Operation Black Redstart," the photographing of Black Redstarts in the banned area of Lowestoft in May, 1944.

Mr. Yeates reckons himself a bird photographer first and foremost and in his preface he expresses his conviction that the photography of birds is a pursuit worth while in itself, stressing the element of excitement and sport that contribute so much to its fascination, in opposition to the attitude of some ornithologists who despise all forms of "birding" which are not materially advancing ornithological knowledge. His standpoint is one with which the reviewer, though he would presumably be classified as a scientific ornithologist, has the greatest possible sympathy, but in any case the ornithologist who produces such first-class results in his chosen field as Mr. Yeates's photographs has no need to feel apologetic.

But even if the author is a photographer primarily he is not of the type whose horizon is limited by the excitement of the chase or the technicalities of picture making. He has a pleasant enthusiasm for the charm of the English country and for birds as birds and writes effectively of both. Moreover his books are themselves sufficient testimony that in the pursuit of subjects for photography he can still keep his eyes open to observe. Of the photographs themselves we have spoken already and we need add no more than that in the present case they are of the standard we expect of him.