

are both annuals, and are of value rather to the systematic botanist than the horticulturist. One of them, *Chirita involuerata*, is from Kaw Tao, and probably the first new plant described from that island. Both the species of *Sonerila* are small plants with pretty pink, but rather fugacious flowers; the foliage in both cases is the chief attraction.

A. K.

**New Reptiles and Batrachians collected by Dr. Hugh M. Smith in Siam.** By Doris M. Cochran. (Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington, Vol. 40, pp. 179-192, December 2, 1927.)

In this paper Miss Cochran, assistant curator of reptiles in the United States National Museum, describes eight new Siamese reptiles and batrachians obtained by Dr. Smith in connection with his collections and investigations of the local fishes.

Three of the new forms are frogs, and two belong in the genus *Philautus*. In 1893 Dr. Boulenger based a new genus, *Chirixalus*, on a Burmese frog with opposed fingers; this genus, however, according to Miss Cochran, must be united with *Philautus* since the discovery by Dr. Malcolm Smith of *Philautus palpebralis* with the first two fingers partly opposed to the others, while by the recent finding of two additional species with fully opposed fingers the supposed gap between the two genera is more completely bridged. The new species are *P. nongkhorensis* and *P. hansenae*, both represented by numerous specimens from Nong Khor in south-eastern Siam, the former having been previously collected at the same place by Dr. Malcolm Smith and identified by him as *Chirixalus doriae*. The third frog, *Microhyla malcolmi*, from Pak Jong, is named for Dr. Malcolm Smith, "whose interest in Siamese reptiles and batrachians during the many years of his residence in Bangkok has added so greatly to our knowledge of the fauna of Malaysia."

The four new lizards are *Sphenomorphus helenae*, collected at Nontaburi, whose nearest relative is *S. annamiticum* (Boettger) from Annam; *Sphenosoma hughi*, from Koh Tao in the Gulf of Siam, closely allied to Dr. Malcolm Smith's species *herberti* from Nakon Sritamarat; *Leiolopisma kohtaoensis*; and *Leiolopisma eunice*, from Ban Suk near Pak Jong.

The new snake, *Callophis hughi*, is as yet known from a single specimen found on Koh Tao.

H. M. S.

**The Birds of the Malay Peninsula.** A general account of the birds inhabiting the region from the Isthmus of Kra to Singapore with the adjacent islands. By Herbert C. Robinson. Volume I: The Commoner Birds. Royal octavo, pages 1-329, 25 plates. London, 1927.

This noteworthy work, issued by authority of the Federated Malay States Government, is to comprise five volumes, of which the

first is now under review. The author, former director of the Federated Malay States Museums, may be regarded as the leading student of the birds of the specified region and the person best qualified to undertake a task of such magnitude. From the author's preface it appears that over 700 birds are treated of and that the different volumes will have the following scope: I. The Commoner Birds; II. The Birds of the Hill Stations; III. Sporting Birds; Birds of the Shore and Estuaries; IV. The Birds of the Low-Country Jungle and Scrub; V. Open-Country and Ricefield Birds, Migratory Birds and Species not included in the other volumes, together with keys to all the forms from the Peninsula and a general index to all the volumes.

The volume opens with useful chapters on the geography and zoogeography of the region, the history of local ornithology, a discussion of avian nomenclature and the general scheme and scope of treatment, migration, and bibliography: and then proceeds to a systematic consideration of the orders and families of local birds, following the classification of the late Dr. R. B. Sharpe. The species that are regarded as "commoner" and receive detailed discussion are those "that are likely to be met with by the ordinary visitor to, or resident in, the Malay Peninsula, whose work or interests keep him to the towns and villages, large and small, and who does not visit the denser jungle or the higher hills". For each species there are given the Malay and sometimes the Siamese names, full color description of the plumage and unfeathered parts (which throughout are called "soft parts" although they include the bill, legs, feet, and claws), dimensions, range inside the Malay Peninsula, extralimital range, nest and eggs, and habits. The limited synonymy that is introduced is necessary for a proper recognition and interpretation of the works and views of other writers. Forty of the species are represented on 25 full-page colored plates from original drawings by H. Grönvold. These plates in general have artistic charm, technical accuracy, and mechanical perfection. The letter-press leaves little to be desired.

The work is entitled to high praise, and only mild criticism, and that on a few minor points, seems warranted. It may be noted, for instance, that in some cases the common English bird name given on a plate does not appear at all in the text; thus, the Malay tree starling (*Aplonis panayensis strigatus*) of the text is called the Malay glossy starling on the plate, and the Malay parroquet (*Psittacula longicauda*) of the plate is referred to only as the long-tailed parroquet in the text. Siamese names of birds are not given for a number of common Siamese species; where such names are supplied they are attributed to Williamson and Herbert whose papers appear in the *Journal of the Natural History Society of Siam* and its continuation. It may be pointed out, however, that some of these vernacular names seem to have been somewhat

inaccurate in the first place and some have been mutilated by the printer. Thus, the proper name for the Brahmany kite is *nok yio* (or *yao*) *deng*, not *nok heo deng*; for the koel or "brain-fever bird" is *nok kawao* or *nok kawow*, not *nok a wow*; and for the weaver finch is *nok kra charp*, not *nok a charp*; the general name for woodpeckers is *nok hua kwan*, not *nok kua kwan*; while the Malay spotted dove (*Streptopelia chinensis tigrina*), of which an excellent colored figure is given, seems to be properly called *nok khao yai* as stated by Herbert, not *nok khao fai*, which is a different bird.

The chief drawback that will be met by those who have occasion to consult the work, and the principal criticism that will probably be made, is one that the author himself anticipated, namely the artificial division of the birds into five indefinite groups, with the result that until the appearance of the fifth volume, with its general index, it is impossible for a consultant to determine in advance which volume may contain the account of any particular species, for the terms "commoner birds", "hill station birds", "sporting birds" (that is, birds hunted for sport), "shore and estuary birds", "low-country jungle and scrub birds", "open-country and ricefield birds", etc., are not distinctive or inclusive and, for convenience of reference, can not take the place of a popular and at the same time scientifically correct presentation by natural families, so that, for example, all of the doves and pigeons, all of the eagles and hawks, all of the owls, all of the kingfishers, all of the woodpeckers, all of the babblers, all of the bulbuls, etc., may be found in one volume with its scope clearly indicated on cover and title page. In the opinion of the reviewer and of a number of people with natural history interests whom he has consulted, the popular appeal which the work undoubtedly makes would not be impaired, and its value to ornithologists would certainly be increased, if the birds were discussed in their logical sequence in the classification scheme that the author has adopted. It may be noted that the equivalent of more than twenty printed pages is devoted to a discussion of orders and families of birds which are represented in the local fauna but do not find a place in this volume as they are considered in detail in one or several of the subsequent volumes in which presumably there may be much repetition of matter.

In view of the general account of Koh Tao given by Dr. Kerr in this issue of the Natural History Supplement, it may be noted that Robinson has this to say of that island:

"Koh Tao, to the north-east of Koh Pennan, but in the same line as the limestone rocks of Koh Talui, is probably also limestone, though I have no exact information on the subject. Its zoology is quite unknown, but would certainly form an interesting subject for investigation. Two species of monkey and two squirrels exist there."

In three visits by Dr. Kerr and one visit by the present

reviewer no monkeys were seen or heard, and fishermen who have been resorting to the island at certain times every year state that there are no monkeys. No limestone occurs, the rocks being entirely granitic, as Dr. Kerr has pointed out.

This work has much interest for bird students in Siam inasmuch as it covers some 30,000 square miles of Siamese territory, or rather more than a third of the entire Malay Peninsula, and includes many birds that occur north of the Isthmus of Kra, some of them throughout the country. The work is heartily recommended to both amateurs and advanced specialists as the most complete, authoritative, and attractive of the books that pertain to the avian fauna of this part of the world.

H. M. SMITH.

#### OBITUARY.

##### THOMAS HAROLD LYLE.

Among the many British naturalists who have helped to improve our knowledge of the zoology of the East, the name of Mr. (later Sir) Thomas Harold Lyle takes an honoured place.

It was in 1896 that I heard he was interested in Natural History and on writing to him urging that he should collect mammalia for the National Museum I received a most gratifying response, and for many years, up to 1919, he took great pains in obtaining small mammals in the interesting and little known country where he was stationed. He was then British Consul in Nan, in North Siam, and he also collected largely in Chiangmai.

He took great interest in, and had a considerable knowledge of, the smaller mammalia of Siam, and sent home quite a series of collections, which on arrival were worked out by Mr. Bonhote and myself. He discovered a number of new mammals, such as the splendid Flying Squirrel, *Peraurista lylei*, the remarkable Bat, *Hipposideros lylei*, *Pteropus lylei* and others, while more recent work on the Indo-Chinese fauna has been greatly assisted by the good series obtained by him of all the local species. The accurate labelling and perfectly preserved skulls of the specimens he sent show the greatest aptitude for such collecting. In all, apart from duplicates, about 300 specimens, mostly from Chiangmai and Nan, have been registered as presented by him.

When in England he generally came into the Museum and had a talk about mammalia, so that I gained a great respect for his powers of observation. Later on at the time of his retirement he hoped to do further collecting for the National Museum in other parts of the world, but he was not able to carry out this scheme.

It may be conveniently recorded here that he was born at Newcastle, 17th January 1873; was appointed to the Consular Service 7th March, 1893; made a C. M. G. 1st January, 1916; a C. B. E.