

REVIEWS

The Birds of Borneo by **Bertram E. Smythies B.A., M.B.O.U. Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh** 1960. pp. *i-xvi*, 1-562; 45 col. pls., 4 half-tone pls., 49 phot. plates, 1 map., £4.4.—.

This fine work was subsidised to some extent by the late **Dato Loke Wan Tho**, particularly in so far as the coloured plates are concerned. These, by **Commander A.M. Hughes, O.B.E., R.N.**, are good and of particular value to the ornithologist in South Thailand. 432 species are depicted and of these 317 occur in Thailand — 40% of the Thai list — 121 of those are species which in Thailand are so far only known from the Peninsula Provinces. The sequence of species followed is that of *Delacour's 'Birds of Malaysia'* which is broadly the sequence of the present Thai Checklist: the treatment is usually good except that as in the author's previous work '**Birds of Burma**' the text descriptions are rather thin, the author clearly relying heavily on the illustrations.

The special chapters contributed to the work by **Tom Harrisson, Lord Medway** and **Dr. J.D. Freeman** enhance the book and the introductory sections by the author are first class — though *Alcippe brunneicauda* has been listed as an endemic species (a later publication lists the species from Thailand).

In all this book is well worth the price asked for it.

E.C.D.

Checklist of the Birds of Thailand. By **Herbert G. Deignan.** Smithsonian Institution. U.S. National Museum, Bulletin 226, pp. *i-x.*, 1-263, 1 map. 1960. (Obtainable from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington D.C., 20402, U.S.A.; price \$1.25).

The distribution of each of the 1173 species and subspecies of birds known to occur in Thailand is succinctly set forth in terms of major geographic regions and provinces. A handy map of numbered provinces is provided, together with an alphabetical and numerical list of them so that one can at a glance look up those referred to in the

range of a bird. A migratory bird is usually characterised in these terms: "*Caprimulgus indicus jotaka*: A visitor from north-eastern Asia, reported on migration or in winter from the Northern plateau (Chieng Mai) and the Peninsular Provinces (Trang)". There are 264 such species in the list. Absence of the allusion to visiting from, say, the North, means that the bird is a permanent resident; thus: "*Eurostopodus macrotis cerviniceps*: The northern and eastern plateaus, the south-eastern provinces, the central plains (Bangkok), and the western and peninsular provinces south to Trang".

From these examples it can be seen that the emphasis is upon subspecies and Latin names. Actually the "1,173 species and subspecies" boil down to 790 full species—but this is an extraordinarily large number for one country. Hence the compression of such a Checklist, in order to get all the principal scientific facts into a convenient compass. As to the absence of common names, Mr *Deignan* told this reviewer that Thai names would be best, but since these are not yet stabilized he preferred no common names at all. Unfortunately, the Latin names are subject to considerable changes due to better understanding of what constitutes the species in a group of birds, and this scientific progress can cause problems for the reader who cannot easily equate the scientific names between the Checklist and the available field books pertaining to this area—including such standard works as *Smythies' "Birds of Burma"* and *Deignan's own "Birds of Northern Thailand"*. The new names will be found, however, in *Peters' "Checklist of Birds of the World"* to which *Deignan* is a contributor of several important South East Asian families.

Mr. *Deignan* has been studying the distribution and taxonomy of Thai birds for the past 30 years, and his conclusions as to their status, which ones constitute full species, and to which family each belongs, are clearly set forth. *Deignan's* list therefore is important enough and authoritative enough that it will serve for a long time as the basis for museum cataloguing, arrangement of species in books and collections and banding reports, and as the framework upon which each of us will build up his field acquaintance of the birds of Thailand.

M.