

Breeding Birds of Kashmir

By Lieut.-Colonel R. S. P. Bates and E. H. N. Lowther. Pp. xxiii+367+85 plates. (London: Oxford University Press, 1952.) 38s. net.

BEFORE the Second World War, Kashmir was a favourite resort of Europeans desirous of a change from the heat of the plains to a cooler climate, wonderful scenery, beautiful flowers, and a great variety of birds. The authors are experienced field naturalists who have made a speciality in photographing birds in India and, in addition to making many studies in the plains, have devoted much time to Kashmir birds. The country they worked in lies between the great Himalayan range and the Pir Panjal range and is drained by the Rivers Jhelum and Kishenganga and the upper waters of the Wardwan River. The whole area consists of valleys with orchards, lakes and marshes, and, on the hill-sides, forests with bare screes above and upland meadows in the higher reaches.

With this great variety of habitats there is a corresponding variety of bird life. In the lower parts of the valleys there are a few oriental species from the plains of India, such as the magpie robin and the jungle babbler. Higher up there are the grey drongo and slaty-headed parakeet, both Himalayan species. Another plains bird is the pheasant-tailed jacana, which is migratory and in the summer abounds among the lotus leaves of the numerous lakes; according to the authors, one was seen on a tarn at 12,050 ft., but they give no date. Of the palæartic birds some are residents; but the majority descend to the Indian plains with the advent of autumn, while others do not go farther than the foothills of the Himalayas.

The volume is confined to the birds breeding in the area mentioned, and many species recorded as nesting in Kashmir are not included since they resort to the more bleak areas of Ladakh and Baltistan to breed. The habits and nests of 116 species are described, and when the authors have not sufficient experience they amplify their notes with extracts from the writings of other ornithologists.

This is a very interesting book, with a certain amount of new information which does not always agree with the accounts in Baker's "Identification of Indian Birds". There are eighty photographs of nests, birds and scenery, most of which are of a high standard, but this can scarcely be said of the coloured plates—the birds are stiff, and the colours have suffered in reproduction.

Études sur les scorpions

Par Max Vachon. Pp. 482. (Alger: Institut Pasteur d'Algerie, 1952.) 2200 francs.

THE determination of scorpions has for years been a puzzling task, because of the variation which many species show. For this reason M. Vachon has undertaken an intensive study of the scorpion fauna of North Africa, with a revision of their systematics and nomenclature.

He now offers us, first, a general account of the order, taken largely from his chapter in Grassé's "Traité de Zoologie", which will be welcomed by many who do not possess that expensive work. Secondly, he reviews the characters that can be successfully used in identifying a scorpion, emphasizing chiefly the trichobothria or *poils auditifs* on the appendages. There follow descriptions of the thirty-three species of North African scorpions which

M. Vachon recognizes, with dichotomic tables summarizing the whole. It is a feature of these keys that they can often be used for mutilated specimens. M. Vachon has no hesitation in adopting a trinomial system for the many subspecies he establishes, nor to extend this by the addition of varietal names for forms which are often distinctive for special localities.

M. Vachon has included an account of the geographical distribution of these animals, and a discussion of their origin and dispersal. His book may be recommended as an impressive example of a truly biological survey of a limited group, almost a model for others engaged in similar work.

T. H. SAVORY

Mellor's Modern Inorganic Chemistry

Revised and edited by Dr. G. D. Parkes. Pp. xxi+967. (London, New York and Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1951.) 25s. net.

THIS well-known text-book was revised and rearranged in 1939 by the late Prof. J. W. Mellor in collaboration with Dr. D. G. Parkes. Since then it has been several times reprinted; for this present edition the text has been once again reset. Up-to-date matter inserted here and there throughout the book accounts for thirty new pages. In addition, there is a new chapter (nine pages) summarizing the chemistry of the metals.

According to the preface of 1939, a guiding principle of the editors was the keeping of "a proper balance between theory and facts". However, revision of the theory is not of the same high level as that of the factual material. Resonance gets a paragraph in small print; the covalent and coordinate links get less than two pages of small print, and not one of these is sufficiently deeply expounded to make it readily applied. Thus in discussing boron fluoride, Dr. Parkes is not able to relate its structure and its intense activity. All the periodic tables end with uranium. The Brønsted-Lowry conception of acids is not mentioned.

Apart from these points, the revision has been well done, and the book retains those qualities which gained for it its high reputation.

G. F.

Sedimentary Petrography

With Special Reference to Petrographic Methods of Correlation of Strata, Petroleum Technology and other Economic Applications of Geology. By Henry B. Milner. Third edition, reprinted with a new Preface and Corrigenda. Pp. xix+666+52 plates. (London: Thomas Murby and Co., 1952.) 50s. net.

MILNER'S "Sedimentary Petrography" has been in use for many years as a text-book and standard work of reference in British universities. The second (first complete) edition was published as long ago as 1929, and an enlarged and completely revised third edition appeared in 1940. This has been out of print for some years and has now been reprinted. It is issued unchanged except for a page of corrigenda and a corrected and revised list of the British Standards quoted in the book. It is to be regretted, in view of the large amount of research carried out on the sediments in the past decade, that pressure of work has not permitted the author to complete the revised fourth edition that he has in hand. Nevertheless, the ground covered in the work as it stands is so comprehensive, including both descriptive matter and laboratory technique, that it will doubtless continue to provide a valuable introduction to the subject for university students.