

and more usual system. Sufficient synonymy is quoted to avoid confusion, and it is outside the scope of this notice to cavil at differences of nomenclature. We extend congratulations to all concerned in the production of this volume, that will prove an admirable reference book both for the naturalist and the collector.

A. D. IMMS

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NATURE IN THE FIELD

Fisherman Naturalist

By Anthony Buxton. Pp. 100 + 39 plates. (London and Glasgow: Wm Collins, Sons and Co., Ltd., 1946.) 10s. 6d. net.

ANTHONY BUXTON, already well known because of his book, "Sporting Intervals at Geneva", has in his "Fisherman Naturalist" produced one of the best Nature books in recent times. One of the charms of this book is that the author writes entirely from his personal experiences—and they have been wide and varied. The first section of the book is devoted to fishing; the second to natural history. From his observations on the habits of birds, particularly the birds of his native county of Norfolk, Anthony Buxton shows that he is one of the best naturalists of the day, and he is able to describe his experiences in a vivid style that always holds the reader's attention. The photographs are very fine. We gather that some, but not all, have been taken by the author; perhaps in a subsequent edition of the book we may be told who was responsible for the others, for a fine photograph of bird or beast gains value and interest when it is known who has taken it.

The author has fished for brown trout, sea-trout and salmon in England, in Scotland and in Norway. He mentions that in Norway the best 'taking' wind for salmon is in the north-west, and I think that this holds good on Scottish rivers. Trout at times do interesting things. I quote from p. 38: "Once, on the Itchen at St. Cross, while fishing in a private garden through which one branch of the river ran, I saw a trout lying by the side of a water-lily leaf. My fly landed on the surface of the leaf, but the trout saw it land, poked its head over the top of the leaf, and picked it up."

The author on one occasion when fishing Loch Airienas in Morvern found many bumble bees lying on the still surface of the loch, and has little doubt that they were struck down by dragon flies. "I have no doubt [p. 58] that the bees on the water were runners which the dragon flies had knocked down but had not bothered or dared to pick up."

Mr. Buxton devotes one chapter to "Terriers at Fishing and other Sport". His terrier "Jane" is an expert at retrieving fish from the water, and this reminds me that a collie we once had was also a very keen fisherwoman. "Dileas" (Faithful) used to be most excited if a salmon rose in a pool which I was fishing. She twice landed a salmon. On one occasion when a Hebridean river was low, a salmon, disturbed by my appearance at a pool, left it and started down the stream for the sea, which was near. "Dileas" entered the river and brought out the salmon, one of 12 lb., clean run. On another occasion she took a salmon from the spawning beds, and when I returned the fish to the water she rushed in and

brought it again to the bank; it required much persuasion to prevent her entering the water for a third time.

Chapter 5 describes a sea flood in Norfolk. This took place in the year 1938, when the sea covered an area of 7,500 acres for three months. The sea at once killed all freshwater fish in the meres and streams of this area, except eels; which flourished in the sea water. A crab was seen walking across a ploughed field, and herring, grey mullet, sprats and shrimps replaced the freshwater fish. Barnacles grew on the stems of reeds. All trees, grasses and bushes were killed. But daffodil bulbs survived (p. 109), although they remained dormant for eight years. Ash trees were killed at once, and oaks also died, but young birch (p. 112) suffered no ill-effect after three months submersion. Many birds deserted the affected area or did not nest, but yellow wagtails increased tenfold.

Mr. Buxton has made extensive observations of the Norfolk harriers from a hide. He states that the pairs of Montagu's harriers which he watched varied greatly, both in beauty of plumage and in temperament. One pair came to recognize the author and had little fear of him. There are valuable notes on the hatching of the chicks. One chick received its first meal (p. 132) only twenty minutes after birth. The photograph of the mother harrier sheltering the young with outspread wings from the sun reminds me of a similar action on the part of a female golden eagle who very gradually opened her great wings until they were fully extended, and stood thus screening her eaglet from the sun's rays.

Mr. Buxton relates that in a marsh harrier's nest (p. 138) the young birds slew and ate two weaklings of the brood. I believe that when one young golden eagle attacks and kills the other, as it often does, it may sometimes devour the victim of this unprovoked aggression. Mr. Buxton is leniently disposed towards the harriers, although they do at times take young partridges. His remarks on so-called 'vermin' (p. 149) are worth quoting: "It is a view commonly held, that if vermin is not destroyed there will be no game or other birds. Those who have travelled abroad in countries where no gamekeepers, in our sense of the word, exist, must have realised that this view is not correct. Of course the destruction by birds and beasts of prey is considerable but there is really enough for all to eat, and if there is any shortage the birds and beasts of prey betake themselves to where there is plenty."

One of the most interesting chapters in the book is that describing the courting of blackgame. A prolonged watch, extending for weeks during the nesting season, was kept from a hide near a fighting ground in Morvern, and new and valuable information on the habits of the birds gathered. The author mentions that the blackgame there have decreased: in Mull, only a few miles distant, from being numerous in 1915 they have now become almost extinct. I am glad to see that the author (p. 93) does almost all his bird watching with a telescope, as I do the same thing. It is harder to use, but I think gives a better view, at all events of larger birds, although for small birds of quick movement binoculars are preferable—but one must choose between one and the other, and a telescope is my preference.

This book is so full of good things that the reviewer is tempted to go on indefinitely. It is obviously written by one who has a deep love for Nature.

SETON GORDON