

BIRDS OF CYPRUS. By DAVID A. BANNERMAN, M.B.E., M.A., Sc.D., F.R.S.E., and W. MARY BANNERMAN, O.B.E., B.A. Illustrated in colour by D. M. Reid-Henry and Roland Green. Oliver and Boyd, 63s.

The position of Cyprus, at the eastern end of the Mediterranean and due north of the Nile delta, makes the island a stepping-stone for the streams of migrating birds travelling between Europe, Asia and their winter quarters in Africa. There are now about 333 species on the Cyprus list; only forty-six of these are residents and only another twenty-three come to breed in summer, so the main interest lies in the large variety of migrants. For this reason *Birds of Cyprus* is a valuable book for anyone concerned with the birds of the Mediterranean region or even most of Europe. As races are seldom distinguishable in the field the description of, for example, the eastern black-eared wheatear will identify perfectly the western form, found in Spain and Portugal.

Dr. and Mrs. Bannerman's work was sponsored by the Government of Cyprus. In spite of the unsettled conditions the authors visited nearly every part of the island and saw most of the species they describe. They also drew on the knowledge of such noted ornithologists as Colonel Meinertzhagen and the late Sir John Bucknill, for five years King's Advocate on the island. The prohibition of shooting during the state of emergency has given the birds a much-needed respite from constant harrying. Many of them now stay longer in Cyprus and are noticeably tamer, especially the wildfowl and flamingos on the salt lake at Akrotiri. The newly formed Cyprus Ornithological Society, started by members of the Forces, has resulted in sixteen species being added to the list, and in many other valuable observations, notably the migration of large birds of prey which had been thought to miss the island altogether.

The smaller migrants are subject to all sorts of hazards. Thousands, especially blackcaps, are caught with bird lime. The trade in "beccaficoes", small birds pickled in jars, goes back at least to 1553 when 1,200 jars were recorded as being sent to Venice. Then there is the chronic problem of the Middle East, the clearance of tree cover.

The popular names of the birds are given in English, Greek and Turkish. The field identifications are excellent and will be invaluable to the ordinary bird-watcher in Cyprus and other countries. Perhaps it might have been mentioned that the Levantine shearwater *Puffinus puffinus yelkouan* is in fact a race of the Manx shearwater. The information on topography,

vegetation and climate is particularly interesting for it shows the special problems with which the birds have to contend, and the reasons for their local movements. The coloured plates, contributed by benefactors, are outstanding. There are also half-tone plates and drawings, and an excellent map.

Though by title a local book, *Birds of Cyprus* will have universal appeal.

V. B.

**GREAT MIGRATIONS.** By GEORGES BLOND. Translated from the French by A. H. Brodrick. Hutchinson of London. 16s.

Monsieur Blond and his excellent translator give us an account mainly of the movements of six creatures—grey lag goose, salmon, European eel, American bison, locust and lemming—but other natural histories are brought in; one of the strangest being that of the grunions. These little fish arrive year after year during the three nights after the full moon in May and June, to mate on the edge of the sandy Californian beach. They tell the exact moment of each high tide with greater accuracy than any man-made instrument and only thus are able to perpetuate their kind.

Under "Buffalo trails" we read the story of the elimination of the American bison, a story of human malevolence. Not only was the bison destroyed with the utmost cruelty, by building rings of fire around waterholes during droughts for example, but, when the Indians, who depended on the bison for food, strove for preservation, the bison's destruction was demanded as a means of solving the "Indian problem". M. Blond quotes from Martin S. Garretson, founder of the American Bison Society, the words of General Sheridan, commander in the south-west, as he hastened to the capital on hearing that Texas was about to adopt conservation laws: "You should on the contrary congratulate the skin hunters and give each one of them a bronze medal with, on one side, the image of a dead bison and on the other that of a distressed Indian."

In considering the extraordinary history of the European and American eels, their breeding in the Sargasso Sea and their migrations to the European and American coasts, M. Blond describes somewhat imaginatively the return of the European eels to their Sargasso nursery. I am glad he emphasizes that there is no actual evidence of this return, for doubt has just been thrown upon it by the investigations of Dr. D. W. Tucker, of the British Museum (Natural History). Dr. Tucker believes