

REVIEWS

Handbuch Der Vogel Mitteleuropas. Vol. 2: Anseriformes (Part I); Vol. 3: Anseriformes (Part II). By K. M. Bauer and U. N. Glutz von Blotzheim. Vol. 2 edited by G. Neithammer, and Vol. 3 by U. N. Glutz von Blotzheim. Published by Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft, Frankfurt am Main, West Germany, in 1968 and 1969 respectively. Vol. 2 has 534 pages, 5 colour plates and 76 line drawings, whereas Vol. 3 has 503 pages, 1 colour plate and 78 line drawings.

The first volume of this Handbook of the Birds of Central Europe, which is planned to contain eleven volumes eventually, was published in 1966. The two volumes published recently contain the Order Anseriformes, i.e. Swans, Geese and Dabbling Ducks in Volume two, and Diving Ducks, Mergansers and "Stiff-tailed" Ducks in Volume three. As in the first volume, and possibly even more so in these two volumes, every species, be it a rare straggler, or a common resident, is treated with the same thoroughness. The enormously complex subject matter is beautifully arranged and clearly presented, together with extensive literature references added to each species. The two volumes contain much more than would be expected from a Handbook, and they could be described as a collection of Monographs. The Mallard is possibly as good an example as any to show the treatment applied to every species. The text dealing with the Mallard occupies 75 pages with the following heading and sub-headings: Distribution of the Species; Subspecies; Field Identification; Description (including all plumages from downy young to adult); Feather structure; Measurements; Molt; Voice; Breeding Distribution; Distribution in Central Europe; Population numbers; Migration and Dispersal; Habitats; Population Densities; Breeding; Breeding Results, Mortality and Age; Behaviour; Food; Literature.

Four excellent colour plates in Volume two show heads of geese, to illustrate differences in some species and in particular to show subspecific differentiation. The remaining two colour plates (one in each volume) show various down and belly feathers found in dabbling and diving ducks' nests respectively, providing a very useful guide to nest identification. Throughout both volumes a few black and white illustrations are used to help identification of certain species in eclipse plumage, and illustrate some important points otherwise difficult to describe. Numerous excellent line drawings show significant features of behaviour, colour patterns and feather structure. Maps are used extensively to show distribution, dispersal and migration, including maps illustrating recoveries of banded birds of many species. Tables are used only where absolutely necessary, and some graphs provide an excellent means of showing the diverse food used by many of the species dealt with.

From the three first volumes of this new Handbook of the Birds of Central Europe, it is evident that, when completed, it will replace many specialised ornithological volumes needed at present to dig up the information easily found in this Handbook.

The only "mistake" the reviewer was able to find was the fact that to his knowledge, at the present time at least, there are no plans for an English edition.

— F.C.K.