

cluding 81 species observed by the authors, recorded for the Iliamna Lake area. At first glance this number is impressive. One soon realizes, however, that considerably fewer than half of these birds are known common breeders. The status of many others is at best vague.

These obvious gaps in our knowledge of the avifauna call attention to the need for more observations. The authors' inclusion of previous records for both the lake area and the adjacent areas is of particular value in this respect. Although probably not an original objective, the annotated list, comprising an up-to-date check list, is essential for any ornithologist visiting the region.

No doubt the Iliamna Lake area is extremely interesting ecologically. Why are some birds, geese for example, so scarce? Why do certain species fluctuate so greatly in number and range through the years? On the other hand, such possible breeders as the little-known surf-bird or the marbled murrelet are reason enough to whet one's appetite for conducting future studies there. To mention one more opportunity, there would seem to be no better place in North America to study the breeding behavior and ecological relationships of our *Hyalocichla* thrushes.

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THE GREAT WHITE MANTLE. The story of the ice ages and the coming of man. By DAVID WOODBURY. *New York: The Viking Press. 1962. 5¾ x 8½ inches. viii + 214 pages. Illustrated. \$6.25 in Canada.*

This book may well become a classic in the fields of poor scientific journalism and unconscious humour. Perhaps "The Great White Mantle" was written for a juvenile audience, but nowhere is this stated in the book or on the dust jacket. Even juveniles may have trouble with this scientific syrup, and it is liable to baffle and confuse that much put upon person — the intelligent layman, for

whom it was presumably written.

Dust jacket descriptions are never reliable indicators of a book's contents, but the way the one on Mr. Woodbury's book begins — by baldly stating that "the full story of the Ice Ages has never before been told" — should put even the most unwary reader on his guard.

Mr. Woodbury adopts two techniques to tell the story of the Wisconsin Ice Age, which takes up the first half of the book. He blends the pathetic fallacy with a "you are there" approach. Never was the first device so pathetic — or so fallacious. In his first chapter, entitled "Whitey", Mr. Woodbury enters a peculiar twilight zone where stones, ice, trees, and other inanimate objects have a life of their own. Whitey is a huge erratic boulder in front of Mr. Woodbury's house in Maine; it apparently acts as a conversation starter for Mr. Woodbury's guests who want to know how it got there. Mr. Woodbury also became curious, and so he goes on to tell how he found out what had happened to Whitey. We follow the erratic up hill and down dale, over the ice and under the ice. Somewhere along the line, the boulder starts to assume human characteristics. Whitey gets "put to work", becomes a "tired, shop-worn boulder", and later "earns credit". By the end of this chapter, the reader may begin to cast uneasy glances at any nearby rock or stone.

If the reader gets past the saga of Whitey, and only duty and a strong stomach impelled this reviewer past that point, he will be whizzed through time and space by Mr. Woodbury as he describes the Wisconsin glaciation. After a look at the broad panorama of ice ages, the author, in a chapter coyly entitled "A Stitch in Time", describes how he will telescope time, and give the reader "the mobility of an angel" so that he can observe the Ice Age in action. The reader is then speeded up through time, slowed down, propelled through space, and generally baffled and confused without being enlightened.

Mr. Woodbury is the master of the inept analogy, the ludicrous metaphor, the futile question and the fatuous

statement. He talks of "Prim bays, holding themselves aloof" along a coast. Ice flow is compared to that of "honey and milk" (p. 52), "pancake batter on a griddle" (p. 52), "Pancake batter... with a few blueberries" (p. 69), "thick molasses" (p. 96) and to a "squirring white worm" (p. 86). The author describes a cirque as a "sort of mixing vat for the ingredients that make ice," and talks of "the sprouting, jostling, joyfully squirring firn". He notes on page 65 that trees are vulnerable to the advance of ice "because they cannot run", but on the next page he refers to "the plucky forest (that) seems to be marching back, like ranks of soldiers, with their camp followers of vines and brushes, in orderly retreat". The processes of firnification are described by references to the antics of two little ice balls, Arthur and Albert. The description of life among the Neanderthals, or "human gorillas", is hilarious.

All this might have been endurable if the book were accurate. But the whole work is too vague, and inaccuracies dot the text. Mr. Woodbury identifies Bonnevillie as a British explorer, calls the

ice cover in Antarctica and Greenland "glaciers", confuses drumlins and eskers, and asserts that "the city of Babylon was flourishing when ice still covered North America".

After discussing the Wisconsin Ice Age, Mr. Woodbury deals with geological history, radio-carbon dating, the origin of man, evolution, and other aspects of the history of the earth and of man in a series of separate chapters. One or two of these later chapters show how well Mr. Woodbury can write, but on the whole they are vague, nebulous, repetitious, confusing, and tedious.

Mr. Woodbury commits the cardinal sin of the scientific journalist in this book—he writes down to his readers. The debate will continue as to whether the specialist or the generalist should interpret science to the public. Comparing Mr. Woodbury's work with Dr. Dyson's recently published book on ice ("The World of Ice") puts the specialist well ahead at this point.

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