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### A concise handbook of British birds

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<sup>a</sup> John Wheldon & Co. , London  
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Montana; *Psaltiparus santaritæ* (Ridgway, Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus. x. p. 697, 1887), from the Santa Rita Mountains, Southern Arizona; *Psaltiparus Lloydii* (Sennett, 'Auk,' v. p. 43, 1888), from the mountains of Western Texas, between the Pecos and Rio Grande; *Regulus satrapa aztecus* (Lawrence in MS.), from the high mountains of Central Mexico; *Poliophtila cærulea obscura* (Ridgway, Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus. v. p. 535, footnote, 1883), from California, Arizona, &c., and Western Mexico; *Sialia mexicana Bairdi* (Ridgway, 'Auk,' xi. pp. 151-157, 1894), from the Rocky Mountains and south into Northern Mexico; and *Sialia mexicana Anabelæ* (Anthony, Proc. Cal. Ac. Sci. 2nd ser. ii. p. 79, 1889), from the San Pedro Mountains, Lower California.

The plates, containing the outline-drawings of the generic characters, are the same as in the first edition, no alteration or addition having been made. Not a little of the nomenclature will scarcely be adopted in Europe, and some of the subspecies appear to be founded on very trifling differences, at least according to our perhaps somewhat old-fashioned views; but the work is one of extreme utility to working ornithologists, and will no doubt be universally adopted in America as the standard work on the subject.

*A Concise Handbook of British Birds.* By H. KIRKE SWANN.  
London: John Wheldon & Co., 1896.

JUDGING from the number of works that have recently been published, varying in quality from Lord Lilford's beautifully illustrated 'Coloured Figures of British Birds' to the work on the Birds of Great Britain in sixpenny parts that is to be seen on almost every railway bookstall, the study of ornithology certainly appears to be on the increase in Great Britain. The last work on the subject that we have received is a handy little manual of British Birds by Mr. H. Kirke Swann, small enough to be carried in the pocket, containing short particulars of the habitat, descriptions of the male and female, and notes on the range in Great Britain, and, in the case of the commoner species, a description of the nest and eggs and short particulars of the habits. Of some of the rarer species a short description is given, but of most of these none is vouchsafed, which appears to us to be a mistake, as a short diagnosis to enable a collector to identify any rare straggler that he might obtain would occupy but little space and would add considerably to the utility of the work. Some bad species have been admitted, as, for instance, *Anthus rupestris*, *Parus Dresseri*, and *Troglodytes hirtensis*, the two latter of which, by the way, are treated only as subspecies, and several American stragglers, such as *Elanoides furcatus*, *Querquedula discors*, and *Querquedula carolinensis*, are included on very insufficient grounds. The range of *Turdus torquatus* is given as extending to the south of Europe, whereas in the mountain ranges of southern

Europe it is replaced by a closely allied but specifically distinct race, *Turdus alpestris*. For the Linnet and Redpolls the genus *Cannabina* is adopted, which is, we think, wrong, as *Linota* is the correct generic title for this group.

The author says in the Preface that "the classification and nomenclature practically accord with those of the 'List of British Birds' compiled by a committee of the British Ornithologists' Union, but a number of necessary alterations have been made"; and we think it would have been much better if he had followed that list more closely than he has done. In the first case the adoption of the so-called *Scomber-scomber* principle is a mistake, as pointed out in the 'Ibis' (1894, p. 566, and 1895, p. 168), and is in direct opposition to the Stricklandian code and the B. O. U. Committee. But Mr. Swann does not, we perceive, adopt this principle all through, as he calls the Hawfinch *Coccothraustes vulgaris* and the Goldfinch *Carduelis elegans* and not *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* and *Carduelis carduelis*. It is a pity also that trinomialism has been introduced into this work, as it is, we hold, not calculated to simplify matters and has not taken root, here in England at least, and seems out of place in a work which is especially adapted for use by the general public and not by scientific ornithologists.

On the whole, however, the work is one calculated to be of use to the small collector, being handy in size, well up to date, and well within the means of small collectors as regards price, but would, we think, prove more useful were it subjected to some alteration and revision.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

*On the Habitat of Gobius elapoides, Gthr.*

*To the Editors of the 'Annals and Magazine of Natural History.'*

GENTLEMEN,—When Dr. Günther (Proc. Zool. Soc. Lond. 1871, p. 665, pl. lxiii. fig. D) gave the description and figure of this beautiful and highly interesting *Gobius* he could not certify its habitat, only supposing that it inhabits some part of the coasts of the Japanese regions. It may thus be worth noticing that the Museum of Upsala has received a specimen, length 83 millim. (68 millim. without caudal fin, from the tip of the snout to the front margin of the last transverse dark brown band), that was taken by Captain Svensson at St. John's Island, 90 miles east of Hongkong.

Yours truly,  
F. A. SMITT.

Stockholm,  
July 7, 1896.