

## BOOK REVIEWS

CHECKLIST TO THE MATHEWS  
ORNITHOLOGICAL COLLECTION.  
Published by the National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1966, v + 309 pp. Price \$4.00.

In his lifetime the late Gregory M. Mathews gathered a magnificent collection of ornithological literature, a collection unrivalled in Australia and now housed in the National Library at Canberra. This collection was cherished by Mathews, and he donated it to the library in 1939 "as a thank-offering for a successful career." From 1940 to 1945 he worked in Canberra, compiling a catalogue of the material. The publication now made is not Mathew's own catalogue, which reflected his concern for nomenclatural problems, but a checklist compiled by photo-lithographing the library catalogue cards of the printed works and by listing manuscript records and pictorial material in the collection. The volume thus formed is produced by photolitho offset and is neatly arranged and presented.

It is important to remember, then, that this publication is not a catalogue, with a subject index, but essentially a checklist. It has a clear purpose, as the Librarian states in his preface—"to assist the ornithologist, already familiar with his subject and its bibliography, by informing him of the scope and content of this important collection." Working within this framework the research worker can ascertain the existence and availability of material, and the amateur ornithologist can become much more aware of literature in his subject. While it is possible to find the collection deficient in an odd book here and there (e.g., in the works of Belcher, Cayley and Captain S. A. White), the scope of the collection remains vast. Much of the material is rare and unobtainable, and includes many foreign publications. Of Mathews himself the library—"his pride and joy"—reveals more catholic tastes than ornithology only—here are the works of Dumont D'Urville, Commodore Perry, Landsborough and Strzelecki. The manuscript references include some to Bowyer-Bower, Diggles, Gould, Iredale, and, of course, Mathews' own notes, drafts, press cutting books and memoirs.

The National Library has done a great service to Australian ornithological literature by this new publication. The Mathews library is the literary treasure of Australian Ornithology, as has now been made clearly known. This Checklist should

prove a valuable aid to all those interested in the bibliography of Australian birds. It certainly achieves its purpose of showing the scope and content of the Mathews collection. As Dr. Serventy points out in his useful introduction to the work, Mathews became essentially a bibliophile, and this Checklist gives proof of this. Finally, the Checklist throws more light on Gregory Mathews himself, and may help to bring nearer the day when an adequate biography is written of him, giving clearer definition of Mathews' role in Australian ornithology and, in Serventy's words, "of a notable Australian."

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