

Birds of the Pacific Slope.—Andrew Jackson Grayson. 1986. The Arion Press, San Francisco, CA. 433 pp. + boxed set of 1 black-and-white and 156 unbound color plates. \$4,500.00.

One hundred and seventeen years after the death of Andrew Jackson Grayson, his monumental work, *Birds of the Pacific Slope*, has been published and his place as a major pioneer ornithologist in western North America is assured.

In his lifetime, Grayson was well known as a business man, writer of travel articles, and painter, but by the turn of the century his name was largely forgotten. In 1948, Lois Chambers Stone found over 150 of Grayson's paintings of birds in the Bancroft Library of The University of California at Berkeley. Mrs. Stone, herself an artist and daughter of Lee Chambers, long-time Business Manager of The Cooper Ornithological Society, was tremendously impressed with the paintings and published a short account (Taylor 1949, *Condor* 51:49-51) of Grayson's life and work, accompanied by a color plate of his painting of the White-fronted Parrot. From then until 1959, 23 of these plates were reproduced in *The Condor*, and overruns of several were used to illustrate the Check-List of the Birds of Mexico (Pacific Coast Avifauna no. 29 and 33). For nearly 40 years, Mrs. Stone worked toward getting all the Grayson plates reproduced full size (19" × 25") and collected material for a biography of Grayson. Both the plates and the biography have been published superbly by The Arion Press.

Grayson was born in 1818 in Louisiana. As a boy, he was stopped from drawing by an unsympathetic teacher and by his father, who thought that there was no future in such an occupation. The young Grayson therefore went into business. In 1846 he joined a group of pioneers on their way to California, where he settled in San Francisco. In 1853 he saw a copy of Audubon's work and determined to do for the Pacific slope of North America what Audubon had done for much of the rest of the United States. To embark on such a project at the age of 35 with no training or experience was remarkable and his success all the more so. For the last 10 years of his life (1859-1869), he made his headquarters in Mazatlan, Mexico, where much time was still occupied with business. He corresponded with Spencer F. Baird and collected numerous specimens for the Smithsonian Institution. At that time the birds of western Mexico were little known, and he discovered many new forms, including a large proportion of the endemics on Socorro Island and the Tres Marias. His paintings of these birds and his descriptions of their habits were the first and, in the case of some of the paintings, are the only ones of the species.

In reproducing Grayson's watercolors, The Arion Press has done an outstanding job, technically and artistically. The paintings show Grayson's artistic development from his early days in California to the

mature work of his later years in Mexico. Like Audubon, whom he admired, Grayson concentrated on depicting birds in the foreground with the plants in which he found them. Here, he is at his best. The birds, often two or three to a plate, are painted in clear colors and, with the vegetation, form a lively composition. Often the plates show the birds' food habits as Grayson observed them: Black-bellied Whistling Ducks in a cornfield or a Bat Falcon holding a parrotlet. The beauty of these plates is such that owners of the portfolio will be strongly tempted to frame their favorites and hang them where they can be enjoyed at length. In many plates, Grayson sketched in backgrounds to add atmosphere. These backgrounds were rendered in subdued tones that add depth to the paintings. The paintings of birds collected near his home in Mazatlan have a freshness and naturalness of pose not found in some paintings of the birds from Socorro Island, which were evidently made from study skins.

The book accompanying the portfolio of plates is also lavishly published. The biography of Grayson by Lois Chambers Stone and Grayson's notes on the birds represented by plates are the meat of the volume. The biography is both scholarly and readable, the author having skillfully interspersed her own writing with extracts from that of Grayson, his wife, and correspondents. In the last chapter, Mrs. Stone discusses Grayson's legacy as artist and scientist and describes his methods of note taking and painting. She also gives an account of his widow's futile efforts to have his work published and finally her gift of the paintings, notebooks, and other materials to the Bancroft Library. The many illustrations, several in color, include portraits of gonads, stomach contents, and occasionally, fat conchis travels, a page from his field notebook, and reproductions of all his early published pictures of birds. Thus the reader gets a vivid picture of the man, his times, and his accomplishments. A selected bibliography and lists of Grayson's published writings and pictures are appended.

Grayson's contributions to the more scientific side of ornithology are also impressive. In these days of field guides and handbooks, it is not easy to imagine working in an area where many of the birds were unknown and identification of even the known ones was achieved by sending specimens to a distant authority and waiting months for his determinations. Grayson assigned each of his specimens a number and kept notebooks in which he recorded descriptions (including colors of soft parts), measurements, sex and condition of gonads, stomach contents, and occasionally, fat condition and anatomical peculiarities. One set of notebooks was organized by species and probably was the principal source for the set of notes on the plates. These were written after each painting was completed and are published verbatim in the book. They vary in length from a brief paragraph to three pages and reveal Gray-

son as a keen observer as well as a collector of data. I found especially interesting his descriptions of the similarity of Zone-tailed Hawks' flight with that of Turkey Vultures, the hunting methods of the Collared Forest-falcon, and nest-building by Yellow-winged Caciques. In sum, the notes provide a wealth of information on the status, habits, and appearance of many of the birds he studied. These, with Grayson's contribution of over eleven hundred specimens to the Smithsonian Institution, provided a foundation for our knowledge of the birds of western Mexico, Socorro Island, and the Tres Marias.

In addition to a preface, introduction, and index, the book contains an annotated list of type specimens of birds and mammals collected by Grayson, which, in spite of several minor errors, will be useful to systematists.

While the price of the work is beyond the means of most ornithologists, it is not exorbitant when one considers the current price of good bird prints. It presents the sum of Grayson's work and our knowledge of the man himself, in a form that will probably never be equalled. Mrs. Stone and The Arion Press are to be congratulated for producing a beautiful work of artistic, historical, and scientific value.—ROBERT W. STORER, Museum of Zoology and Department of Biology, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.