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Philippine Birds

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Book Reviews

PHILIPPINE BIRDS. By John Eleuthere duPont. With color illustrations by George Sandstrom and John R. Peirce. Published by the Delaware Museum of Natural History, Greenville, Delaware. 1971. x, 480 pp.

At last! Here they are between the two covers of a book: almost all the birds of the Philippines on 85 color plates. And what color! For openers, try the trogon (Plate 43); then turn one page, please, to the kingfishers. Who would ever have thought that so much beauty in such soft, such brilliant colors, haunts our fields and forests? I wish these reproductions could adorn the walls of every class-room in our country.

The text accompanying the plates is scientific, hence formal and somewhat disappointing to the amateur. It gives measurement, description, range, etc. Of added interest would have been how to identify the bird in the field; a word or so about the song and call of a bird; whether it is a bird of the mountains or the low-lands. But one cannot fault an author for not doing what he did not intend to do.

From my limited experience, I find the illustrations most accurate. What a pleasure it is to recognize in the pages of a book, the birds that I have observed in Novaliches, Baguio and elsewhere.

We have been waiting and hoping for a book like this for a long, long time. In a few years perhaps nothing will be left of some of these birds (those few which are on the verge of extinction) except the pictures we have of them. *Philippine Birds* helps us to appreciate and want to preserve our natural heritage.

I hope this is only the first book from Mr. duPont on the birds of the Philippines. What we need badly is a hand-book, illustrated in color of our common birds and how to identify them. Such a book, if moderately priced, would open to many the wonder of birds: their color, flight and song. One who has experienced that wonder never knows another moment of boredom, and soon learns that God is full of surprises.

Maraming salamat, Mr. duPont. Your book is a treasure.

Charles E. Wolf, S.J.