

REVIEWS

HIGH TIDE AND AN EAST WIND. THE STORY OF THE BLACK DUCK.

By BRUCE S. WRIGHT. Harrisburg, Pa.: The Stackpole Co., and Washington, D.C.: The Wildlife Management Institute. 1954. 9 x 6 inches; xiii + 162 pages; illustrations; maps. \$4.50.

'High tide and an east wind' contains the results of a study of the Black Duck "to find out what, if anything, could be done to improve breeding conditions" in that part of the species' flyway lying in eastern Canada. Work was begun in 1945 and pursued in the St. John River valley in New Brunswick, and also, less intensively, in Labrador and Ungava. Data from all parts of the Black Ducks' range are presented and topics include: spring migration, reproductive behaviour, survival of young, food habits, autumn migration, hunting, distribution, and management. The treatment is mainly in seasonal order.

Readers of *Arctic* will be interested to see frequent references to conditions in Labrador and Ungava, based on Wright's travels in southern Labrador in June 1947, and in Ungava in August and September 1948. 'Report on explorations in the Labrador Peninsula . . .' by A. P. Low, 1896, is quoted extensively. Through an oversight, perhaps, there is no reference to the extensive aerial surveys of waterfowl carried out annually in Ungava since 1952 by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

'High tide and an east wind' contains more information on the Black Duck than has appeared elsewhere, and few will read it without increasing their knowledge. This book shows a pleasing regard for the aesthetic attributes of the birds and the country they frequent; the vocabulary employed is such that persons without an ornithological background need not hesitate to read it.

However, many readers will find the style ambiguous and may feel that, for a scientific account, there is undue intrusion of personal references. The scientist will note (and the laymen should be warned) that a number of conclusions are categorically stated on the basis of rather scanty evidence. For example, no evidence is given that great horned owls have taken a serious toll of a local population of waterfowl (p. 27). Similarly on page 49, the protozoan blood parasite, *Leucocytozoon anatis*, is called "The most serious cause of duckling mortality from disease and parasites among Black Ducks". This may be so, but it should be demonstrated. It is stated that infection by different life stages of *Leucocytozoon* was noted in at least 6 out of 19 Black Ducks (or 9 out of the 19, the statement is not clear) yet, contrarily, on page 51 it is concluded that, because no sick ducks were found, the parasite "is not a serious mortality factor in this region". The reviewer is puzzled also by the following sentence: "The Ontario flights bound for the south Atlantic States are from two to three weeks earlier than those from the northeast, and they reach the lower Mississippi and the Gulf Coast in the latter part of December". Either the phrase "south Atlantic States" is incorrectly applied or it must be assumed that the Mississippi migration route includes a swing toward the Carolinas and Georgia.

Because the average brood of Black Ducks less than two weeks old is 8, and the average number of eggs in completed clutches is 9, it is deduced that "infertile eggs may be responsible for a loss of one egg, or 11 per cent of the clutch" (p. 47). Such a high rate of infertility is not uncommon among domestic waterfowl, but is rare in the

wild. Failure of young to hatch because of malposition of the fully-developed embryo or abnormal hardness of the shell, and losses due to accidents or unfavourable weather during the first day or two after hatching might be expected to account for a significant proportion of the 11 per cent attributed wholly to infertility.

The relation of forest fires to Black Duck reproduction is mentioned briefly (p. 40) and it is stated that 12.1 per cent of the total acreage burned in New Brunswick is burned during the nesting season. It would be more useful had the writer presented the actual rather than the relative extent of burning in the spring, and then estimated the effect of fire on Black Duck populations.

Figures depicting distribution and migration of Black Ducks may mislead those who do not read the text carefully. For instance, the post-breeding range of the species is indicated to include all of Saskatchewan and at least one-third of Alberta, as well as adjoining portions of the Northwest Territories. Several isolated records are the only basis for the range as shown, and the area mentioned cannot be considered within the species' normal range.

Illustrations, both photographs and drawings, the latter by Peter Ward, are generally excellent and in spite of the shortcomings mentioned, everyone interested in waterfowl in eastern Canada should read this book.

DAVID A. MUNRO

ARCTIC LIVING.

The story of Grimsey.

By ROBERT JACK. With a Foreword by Vilhjalmur Stefansson. *Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1955. 8½ x 5½ inches; 181 pages; illustrations. \$4.00.*

Unlike the author of this book and unlike Dr. Stefansson, who wrote the Foreword, I have never set foot on Grimsey. And yet, I shall always remember it as well as a few other islands in far northern waters, if for nothing else, than for being where it is. For I

have seen Grimsey as perhaps the Rev. Mr. Jack and Dr. Stefansson have not—from the cockpit of a storm-tossed aircraft, battered and exhausted and near the end of endurance, returning from icepatrols and escorting Murmansk-bound convoys, looking for land after many hours over black water and white ice. To see the cliffs of "the Grim Island" with foaming seas at the foot and fractured scud swirling over the tops, was like seeing a roadsign, a beacon. From there it was 30 miles SSW. to the mouth of Eyjafjörður, at the head of which was Akureyri, and "home".

We did not have much opportunity to know the Icelanders, but we saw them, at least, in such places as Reykjavik, Akureyri, Budareyri and Seydisfjörður. Flying over Grimsey we could occasionally see their houses and wondered what manner of people lived there. Now Robert Jack has told us. The story of this small island north of Iceland, with its sixty inhabitants, has been told as no native could tell it. The author lived there, spoke the language and served the people; he was one of them, and yet an "outsider". His book will be eagerly read by all who have visited Iceland, and it should be read by all who like to learn of life in far places. Grimsey is a lonely and difficult place to call home. Robert Jack should be congratulated for making a success of his years there, and for writing about them in such an entertaining way.

As a Scot, who learned to love Iceland and its people, the Rev. Mr. Jack must have much more to tell than this. He did what few "foreigners" could do, learned the language and obtained his degree at the University of Iceland, became an Icelandic minister and was accepted happily by his parishioners. Having lived in Iceland almost continuously since 1936, until leaving for Canada two years ago, the author must have observed and studied the people of the Saga Island in three different periods: prewar, wartime, and the years since 1945. Iceland, like most countries, has changed since 1939, and Robert Jack could be the man to interpret these changes. His