Book Reviews

Fall of the Sparrow. Jay Williams. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1951. 158 pp. $3.00.

Every conservation-minded person will applaud this book, and every sportsman will want to join forces in avoiding needless destruction of wildlife. *Fall of the Sparrow* is, however, a book that should be read by everyone. It is easy reading, and in its discussion of the probable end of man it has strong appeal for the general reader. But the book does more. It not only tells in a very engaging way why species have vanished, but makes the reader aware of how many more are being threatened, including his own. Furthermore, there is an interesting account of many creatures now extinct, as well as entertaining comments on the origin of legendary animals. One soon becomes aware that behind Williams' humor there is much seriousness.

After reading past the first hundred pages and becoming distressed over the rate at which man has been ridding the earth of such animals as the dodo, auk, sea cow, etc., one is greatly gratified to come upon the next-to-the-last section dealing with "work on behalf of oppressed beasts, birds, and fish." Here Williams gives a worth-while history of control programs and current methods, including the International Union for Protection of Nature. Thus encouraged, one reads into the final chapter, only to become disturbed again because of the many minority human races that are disappearing as a result of man's meddling. The fate of the Tasmanians shows what "can happen when one human culture meets another. Just as man affects, usually adversely, the beasts with whom he suddenly comes in contact, so he also affects the members of his own species."

The writing is attractive, and each chapter has a full-page satiric drawing by Richard Taylor. All is done convincingly and is thought-provoking. The book is dedicated to the cahow, although this bird is not referred to in the text or in the index. Lack of inclusion of the cahow, an animal "extinct from 1621 to 1951 WHO BROUGHT HIMSELF BACK ALIVE," seems unfortunate, since not everyone sees *Natural History* magazine, where the recent rediscovery of this supposedly extinct form was announced (April 1951). Nevertheless, for so small a book this one is full of detailed information.

MARGERY MILNE

Department of Zoology
University of New Hampshire

The Housefly: Its Natural History, Medical Importance, and Control. Luther S. West. Ithaca, N. Y.: Comstock Pub., 1951. 584 pp. $7.50.

Like a new production of a favorite movie or classic stage play, Professor West's book presents anew a comprehensive treatment of an old subject—the housefly, *Musca domestica* Linn. And like many renewed theatrical productions, the new version surpasses the earlier and now out-of-print ones (by Howard in 1911, by Graham-Smith in 1914, and by Hewitt in 1914), both as to content and technical make-up. The newer knowledge concerning the fly itself, its natural history, and especially methods of control makes this modern account particularly needful and timely.

The thoroughness of the book's coverage is indicated by the inclusion of discussions on the fly's external and internal morphology, physiology, behavior, life history, taxonomy, distribution, ecology, parasites and microbiota, relation to disease and public health, usefulness as an experimental animal, and control, as well as a delineation of the field, museum, and laboratory techniques concerned in the study of the insect. The economic, medical, and public health aspects are given major emphasis. The three chapters on control include a discussion of recommended sanitary measures, as well as the uses and dangers of the new insecticides. An extensive bibliography adds to the book's value as a reference volume. According to the author:

> The book is intended primarily for the use of public health officers, Army and Navy medical personnel, experiment station workers, college and university staff members, and students of animal biology . . . [and, by the reduction of technical language to a minimum, for] all intelligent citizens who may be interested in natural history, sanitation, or public health.

The book is well written and well illustrated, except that more illustrations might have been used at a few pertinent points. Especially noteworthy are the refreshingly large, clear anatomical and morphological drawings used in the early chapters. The tabulation of detailed and bulky information is also excellently done, although an inconsistency is noticeable in the use of general or main headings on tables (for example, Tables 8, 9, and 10 and most others lack clear explanatory headings such as Tables 12, 13, and 14 have). Whether the author really intends the reader to consider the rickettsiae, viruses, and spirochetes associated with the housefly to be true "natural enemies" of this insect is not clear (p. 223), but such implication is to be questioned.

Except for a few peccadilloes of the type common to almost any first edition, the book in general is accurate, thorough, and authoritative. Furthermore, West has combined cold scientific data, a comprehensive review of the literature, pertinent historical background, and a warm, friendly style of writing in such a way as to come up with a scholarly, valuable, and practical treatise. An inviting format adds to the attractiveness of the book, making it one to be desired in the libraries of many biologists and public health workers.

EDWARD A. STEINHAUS

Laboratory of Insect Pathology
Division of Biological Control
University of California, Berkeley