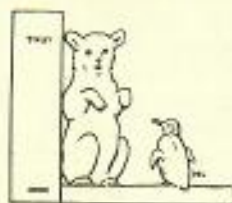


THE SCIENTIST'S BOOKSHELF

By M. GRAHAM NETTING

Curator of Herpetology, Carnegie Museum



THE PACIFIC WORLD Edited by FAIRFIELD OSBORN. New York: W. W. Norton and Co. 1944. 218 pp. \$3.00. Carnegie Library call no. 919 O29

PACIFIC OCEAN HANDBOOK By ELIOT G. MEARS. Stanford University: James Ladd Delkin. 1944. 198 pp. \$2.00 with cloth binding, \$1.00 in paper. Carnegie Library call no. 551.46 M55

THE RAFT BOOK: LORE OF THE SEA AND THE SKY By HAROLD GATTY. New York: George Grady Press. 1943. 152 pp., plus folded charts and tables. \$3.25. Carnegie Library call no. r 527 G23



THREE years of conflict have done immeasurably more to focus American attention on the Pacific than three centuries of effort by travelers, explorers, writers, and scientists. Dozens of scholarly books and

Twenty-eight experts—including Dr. A. Avinoff, Director of the Carnegie Museum—representing nine scientific institutions, were the principal contributors to this volume; a number of the regional chapters are credited to additional collaborators. The entertaining manner in which a wealth of information is presented is proof that science need not be dull, and is a tribute, as well, to the editorial perspicacity of Dr. Fairfield Osborn, President of the New York Zoological Society. Vivid comparisons enliven the pages—"Melanesians go in for clubs and secret societies with a fervor perhaps equalled only in the United States."

hundreds of timely pamphlets about it have appeared since Pearl Harbor. Three recent volumes, especially noteworthy for natural history content or usefulness to fighting men in the Pacific, have been selected for attention here. The avid background reader will find the Carnegie Library reading list, "The South Pacific," a useful guide to other wartime, and prewar, titles.

No one volume about the Pacific can do full justice to this watery hemisphere, which really merits Hollywoodian superlatives. In area alone, the Pacific is much greater than all the lands of the world combined. Already we find it difficult to remember the names of all the islands captured by our forces. Fortunately, the conquest of Japan will not necessitate amphibious assault on any great percentage of the Pacific islands, for there are 2,650 main islands and tens of thousands of islets and fragments.

The Pacific World is the most readable introduction to the vast Pacific and its lands, peoples, animals, and plants thus far published. It was conceived by Childs Frick and Harold J. Coolidge, Jr., and sponsored by the American Committee for International Wildlife Protection, in the hope that information about Pacific animals would encourage their conservation. An overseas cousin of the crane, the crested kagu, is found only on New Caledonia, for example, and if it were exterminated there it would be as extinct as the dodo.

The first eleven chapters treat the Pacific as a whole—its islands, explorations, climates, tides, stars, peoples, animals, and plants. These brief chapters should whet the appetite of many readers for the supplementary hand-

books now in preparation. We learn, for instance, that New Guinea, the second largest island in the world, boasts the world's largest butterfly and largest moth, and has 2,500 different kinds of orchids!

The latter half of the volume contains nine chapters, descriptive of various regions within the Pacific, each illustrated with a simplified map. These regional discussions are well done, and represent a nice balance of information on physical and cultural geography. The concluding pages are devoted to a tabular summary of facts about Pacific islands, and distribution charts for mammals, birds, and reptiles and amphibians.

This book has some faults, for it was prepared with war-induced rapidity; hence, it is not astonishing that it contains some factual errors, or that the nine colored plates, executed by excellent artists, vary in quality of reproduction. In view of the generosity of the publishers and contributors in enabling the *Infantry Journal* to publish a pocket-size, paper-bound, fifty-cent edition—for sale to men in the armed services only—it would be ungenerous of this reviewer to carp about peccadilloes.

Stay-at-homes will not find the small-print, fact-crammed *Pacific Ocean Handbook* exciting reading, but any service man interested in the physical phenomena of a Pacific locale will welcome it. The appendices alone, treating such matters as navigating distances, standard time, food plants, jungle pests, and sea food for the shipwrecked, are of tremendous practical value. The main part contains much scientific information upon volcanoes and earthquakes, tides, currents, winds, storms, temperature, precipitation, fog, and additional subjects, interlarded with good maps and diagrams. The 4½ ounce paper-bound copy is light enough to mail readily, and of convenient size for uniform pockets.

The Raft Book was written specifically for a small but heroic group of readers, "those who, without previous ex-

perience in navigation and without navigating instruments, find themselves in small craft in the open sea and who have to make their way to land." It consists of an attractively printed and illustrated paper-covered pamphlet, boxed with an ingenious combined world and star chart, and a large sheet of navigation tables. A seagoing edition, not available to the public, is packaged in a waterproofed envelope, for installation in rafts and lifeboats. The author, navigator of the Post-Gatty "Round the World Flight" in 1931, has studied the navigation methods of the oceanic Polynesians, who, in canoes scarcely larger than some life rafts, made interisland voyages of thousands of miles, long before our timorous ancestors dared "to venture out beyond the Pillars of Hercules into the Green Sea of Darkness, the Atlantic." The methods of navigating with a watch, a stick, a piece of string, and the materials provided, although unquestionably ingenious and suited to the needs of a man adrift, will be of less interest to the readers of the CARNEGIE MAGAZINE than the fascinating sea and sky lore also included. One excellent colored plate, for example, illustrates how a cloud may reflect the color of the green water of an atoll lagoon beyond the horizon, and how fixed clouds may also indicate distant land. The possibilities of finding land by scents and sounds are also discussed, and Gatty remarks that he has smelled New Zealand hay eighty miles offshore. Bird students will find the well-illustrated treatment of sea birds as indicators of land absorbing reading, the identification of critical species being facilitated by five plates by the well-known bird artist, Frances Lee Jaques. Pelagic creatures are discussed briefly, with emphasis on fishing techniques and edibility. Ammonia-laden shark fillets become edible if towed astern, and then dried.

If I were on a distant isle, these three volumes would certainly be included in my six-inch shelf of essential books.