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## BOOK REVIEWS

**The Outermost House**, Henry Beston, introduction by Robert Finch, xxiv + 222 pp. Penguin Books, New York, soft cover \$6.95.

This book is part of the Penguin Nature Library. In 1925, Henry Beston bought a small acreage on Cape Cod and built a two room home there, in which he lived for a year. The book is a record of that period: his observations on the sea, the land and its creatures and features, and anything else that attracted his attention. His observations are interesting to read just for themselves, but some items invite comparison of those times with the present. "An irreducible residue of crude oil, called by refiners 'slop,' remains in stills after oil distillation, and this is pumped into southbound tankers and emptied far offshore." Sometimes some of it washed ashore, and oiled birds showed up, and treatment of them was even less successful then. The author mentions that when Thoreau walked the area in 1849 it was practically treeless, but that trees have since been planted. (Remind you of Halsey?) He doesn't mention that before the white man came, the cape probably was mostly forested. On the other hand, it is doubtful that the shipwrecks he talks about are as common now as they were then.

**Driftwood Valley**. Theodora C. Stanwell-Fletcher, introduced by Wendell Berry, xvii + 384 pp., 5 x 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ , Penguin Books, New York, soft cover \$8.95.

The author and her husband spent August 1937 to January 1939 and mid-February to mid-September 1941 in northern British Columbia, collecting animals, birds, and plants for the British Columbia Provincial Museum. The area was not well known to the few inhabitants; the weather ran from below -50° to over 90°; a winter's snow would be 12 feet or so, and some of it might be a soft form that allowed a person on snowshoes to sink to his knees in it; in summer mosquitoes and gnats often made protective clothing necessary. They had no near neighbors, and for communications depended mostly on the infrequent casual passer-by. They were proud of their two room cabin,

and its windows, some glass, some plastic, and mentioned with disapproval the small Indian cabins, with maybe only one window. (That was before the R factor had been invented, and they found that getting wood to heat the cabin was time consuming.) It is interesting to read how they coped, and of their adventures with animals (and people). The book has an appendix listing the scientific and common names of the plants, fish, amphibians, birds, and mammals found in the Driftwood region (14 pages).

**Collins Handguide to the Birds of the Indian Sub-Continent**, Martin Woodcock, 176 pp., 4.5 x 7.5, bibliography, index, Stephen Greene Press, Lexington, Mass., \$11.95.

The first 11 pages give a general look at the sub-continent - the various regions and what may be expected. The main section contains descriptions and color illustrations of 273 species (about 1250 have been recorded in the area), followed by a "Synopsis of Families," which lists all families of birds found in the area, the total number of species of each which have been recorded, and descriptions and black-and-white illustrations of 272 additional species. A really serious birder probably would want a more complete guide, but for the less serious one this is a light, convenient guide.