

## A NEW SUBSPECIES OF WILLOW GROUSE FROM NEWFOUNDLAND.

BY DR. L. STEJNEGER.

*Lagopus alba alleni* Stejneger. NEWFOUNDLAND WILLOW GROUSE.

SUBSPECIFIC CHAR: Similar to *Lagopus alba* (Gm.), but distinguished by having the shafts of both primaries and secondaries black, and by having the wing-feathers, even some of the coverts, marked and mottled with blackish.

HABITAT: Newfoundland.

The type specimen will be presented to the U. S. National Museum. It measures as follows: Bill from nostrils to tip, 11 mm.; wing (not flattened), 186 mm.; tail-feathers, 111 mm.; tarsus, 40 mm.

Four specimens, all in transition from autumnal to winter plumage, have been examined.\*

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## SECOND MEETING OF THE AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION.

THE second meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union was recently held at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, the session beginning September 30 and occupying three days. The attendance, though not large, was as large as could reasonably be hoped for, considering the remoteness of residence from the place of meeting of many of the members. Besides sixteen Active Members, several Associate Members attended the meeting, which was rendered memorable by the presence of two of our distinguished Foreign Members, Dr. P. L. Sclater and Mr. Howard Saunders—the present editors of 'The Ibis' and leading members of the B. O. U.—who were cordially invited to take part in the proceedings.

The first day's session began at 11.30 A. M., the President in the chair. After the calling of the roll, and the reading and approval of the minutes of the previous meeting, the Secretary presented his report, in the course of which he gave a summary of the present status of membership in the Union. This official statement gave the number of Active Members as 44; of Foreign,

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\* Since writing the above I have examined other specimens from Newfoundland, not less than 14 in all, all of which present the above characters.

20; of Corresponding, 16; of Associate, 63. The Secretary also referred to the very cordial manner in which the distinguished Foreign Members had responded to their notifications of election, which were usually accompanied with hearty expressions of interest in the Union and its work. The Secretary also called attention to the loss the Union had sustained through the death of one of its most eminent Foreign Members, Dr. Hermann Schlegel of Leyden.\* He also called attention to the death of two Associate Members—Mr. Edgar A. Small of Hagarstown, Md., and Mr. Henry G. Vennor of Montreal.†

The Secretary's report was followed by that of the Council, which consisted of nominations for membership, and recommendation of certain proposed changes in the Constitution. The latter relate chiefly to the conditions of membership of the class of Associate Members. This provides for the payment of an annual assessment of three dollars, which gives title to one copy of the regular serial publication of the Union, namely, 'The Auk.' Action on these proposed amendments will be taken at the next annual meeting of the Union. In view of these proposed changes, the Council advised the election of only a small number of members to this class at the present meeting. Action being had upon the nominations reported by the Council, the candidates were all unanimously elected. The following four members were added to the list of Active Members, namely: Capt. Thomas W. Blakiston (M. B. O. U.), late of Japan, but now a resident of the United States; Professor W. W. Cooke, Red Rock, Ind. Terr.; Dr. Leonhard Stejneger, Washington, D. C. (transferred from the class of Corresponding Members); Mr. Otto Widmann, St. Louis, Mo.

The list of Foreign Members was increased by the addition of the following, five in number: Dr. Hermann Burmeister, Buenos Ayres; Heinrich Gätke, Heligoland; Mr. Howard Saunders, F. L. S., England; Mr. Henry Seeborn, F. L. S., England; Dr. W. Taczanowski, Russia.

The following named were elected Corresponding Members: Dr. J. G. Cooper, Hayward, Cal.; Mr. W. E. D. Scott, American Flag, Pinal Co., Arizona; Dr. C. Altum, Eberswalde, Germany; Dr. John A. Anderson, F. R. S., Calcutta, India;

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\* See Auk, I, p. 205. † See Auk, I, p. 306.

U. Bachofen von Echt, Pres. Orn. Verein, Vienna, Austria ; W. T. Blanford, F. R. S., London, Eng. ; Dr. Louis Bureau, Nantes, France ; Maj. E. A. Butler, Roy. Irish Reg., Belfast, Ireland ; Dr. Edouard Baldamus, Coburg, Germany ; Dr. Rudolf Blasius and Dr. Wilhelm Blasius, Brunswick, Germany ; Dr. Bogdanow, Moscow, Russia ; John Cordeaux, Ulceby, Eng. ; Dr. Alphonse Dubois, Bruxelles, Belgium ; Professor A. Dugès, Mexico ; Maj. H. W. Feilden, Roy. Art., Woolwich, Eng. ; Dr. Victor Fatio, Geneva, Switz. ; Dr. A. Girtanner, St. Galle, Switz. ; Dr. Hans Gadow, Cambridge, Eng. ; Col. H. H. Godwin-Austin, London, Eng. ; Mr. Edward Hargitt, London, Eng. ; Dr. Julius von Haast, Christchurch, New Zealand ; Dr. E. Holub, Vienna, Aust. ; Dr. C. F. Homeyer, Pres. Allg. Orn. Deutsch. Gesells., Berlin, Germ. ; Dr. C. F. W. Krukenberg, Wurzburg, Germ. ; Dr. Theobold J. Kruper, Athens, Greece ; E. L. Layard, H. B. M. Con., Noumea, New Cal. ; Graf. A. F. Marschall, Vienna, Aust. ; Dr. A. B. Meyer, Dresden, Germ. ; Dr. Julius von Madarász, Budapest ; Dr. M. Menzbier, Moscow, Russ. ; Dr. A. von Mojsisovics, Gratz ; Dr. A. J. Malmgren, Helsingfors, Finland ; Dr. A. von Middendorf, Dorpat, Russia ; Mr. Frank Nicholson, Manchester, Eng. ; E. W. Oates, London, Eng. ; Col. N. Prejevalsky, St. Petersburg, Russia ; Dr. R. Philippi, Santiago, Chili ; Dr. Gustav Radde, Tiflis, Russia ; Mr. E. P. Ramsey, Sidney, N. S. W., Australia ; Dr. Anton Reichenow, Berlin, Germ. ; Dr. Leopold von Schrenck, St. Petersburg, Russia ; Capt. G. E. Shelley, London, Eng. ; Baron Edmund de Selys-Longchamps, Liège, Belgium ; Dr. Herman Shalow, Berlin, Germ. ; Dr. W. Severtzow, Russia ; Henry Stevenson, F. L. S., Norwich, Eng. ; Rev. Canon H. B. Tristram, Durham, Eng. ; Count Victor von Tschusi zu Schmidoffen, Salzburg, Hung. ; Dr. Hjalmar Theel, Upsala, Sweden ; Don José C. Zeledon, Costa Rica.

Reports of Committees being next in order, the President called for that of the Committee on the 'Revision of the Nomenclature and Classification of North American Birds.' Dr. Elliott Coues, Chairman of the Committee, stated that the Committee had held numerous sittings, and had gone carefully over most of the subject, but as yet had left practically untouched all questions of synonymy, and also classification, as regards the higher groups. The work accomplished was the fixing of the status of the genera and subgenera, and of the species and subspecies. Although so

much had been accomplished, there was still much to be done, and therefore the report now rendered must be in the nature of a report of progress.

The first thing the Committee had to determine was the boundaries of the region to be included ; and it was decided that North America, as regards the present list of birds, was to be understood as including the continent north of Mexico, Lower California, and Greenland. It had also to determine what evidence should be required for the admission of a species into the list ; this it was decided must be proof of its actual capture within the prescribed limits. The Committee also found it necessary, in order to determine the tenability of names, to consider in detail the principles of nomenclature. For this purpose it took, as the most convenient starting point, the 'Stricklandian' or 'B. A. Code,' modifying and supplementing it to the best of its ability to make it meet the contingencies of modern science. The chief innovations are the adoption of the tenth (1758) edition of the 'Systema Naturalis' of Linnæus as the starting-point for the binomial system of nomenclature, and of trinomials for the designation of subspecies. While the spirit of the old code is maintained in strictness, many of its provisions are carried out in greater detail, in the hope of presenting acceptable rules for cases hitherto but imperfectly provided for.

On the completion of this portion of the work, and after having gone carefully over the matter of genera and subgenera, the Committee, with the view of expediting the work before it, divided itself into two sub-committees, to one of which (consisting of Messrs. Ridgway, Brewster, and Henshaw) was assigned the duty of fixing the status of the species and subspecies, and to the other (consisting of Dr. Coues and Mr. Allen) that of codifying the rulings of the Committee on principles of nomenclature.

Each Sub-committee later laid the results of its work before the full Committee, by whom it was duly ratified. Wherever doubt arose in reference to the rank of genera or subgenera, or the status of species or subspecies, appeal was at once made to specimens, and decided by careful examination of abundant material.

The voluminous report of the Committee on the special subject of rules was not fully in readiness for the press, but the final codification was so far advanced that the Committee was able to give the full report in substance, and to a large extent in its com-

pleted form. The reading of this part of the report (by Dr. Coues) occupied an hour and a half, and was followed by the report (read by Mr. Ridgway) on species and subspecies, including the generic changes, and presenting the list as it will finally appear, waiving such questions of synonymy as are yet to be decided. The report was accepted and adopted unanimously, and recommitted to the Committee, with instructions to complete it and submit it to the Council as soon as practicable, the Council being empowered and instructed to accept and adopt the report as finally rendered, with such changes and modifications as they may deem necessary, and to publish the same, under copyright, in part or in whole, in one or more forms, in the name and under the auspices of the American Ornithologists' Union. The reading and acceptance of the report concluded the proceedings of the first day's session.

At the second day's session the report of the Committee 'On the Eligibility or Ineligibility of the European House Sparrow in America,' was then presented by the Chairman of the Committee, Dr. J. B. Holder. The Committee, immediately after its appointment, issued a circular letter embodying a series of questions framed to elicit as fully as possible information regarding the habits of this bird. The circular was largely distributed among agriculturists, gardeners, and persons of known ability and unbiased judgment in respect to results of observation and experiment. While an attempt was made to gain information concerning the bird's history and its present geographical distribution in this country, the main question called for a fair expression of facts respecting whether the bird was directly or indirectly beneficial to agriculture and horticulture. The twenty-eight questions embraced in the circular called for data respecting its present numbers and its rate of increase; the number of broods and number of young to the brood; its protection by law; to what extent fostered and fed by man; its habits with reference to other birds; its ability and disposition to injure fruit, vegetables, and field cereals; its food, whether vegetable or insect, both in respect to the nestlings and adult, and the kinds of insects destroyed; whether known to feed upon the vapor moth (*Orgyia leucostigma*), and ichneumon flies, and to what extent; and whether the observations reported rested upon actual observation and dissection. The large number of returns received bear overwhelmingly against the Sparrow. There

is ample testimony showing that the young are fed pretty uniformly upon the larvæ of numerous species of insects, and that the adult birds prefer grain and the seeds of indigenous plants. Evidently the services of this bird are not to be overlooked. On the other hand, testimony of a conclusive character points to the retirement of our native insectivorous birds before the hosts of Sparrows, and leads to the inevitable conclusion that the fostering of this bird tends manifestly to the suppression of birds designed by nature to occupy our woodlands, parks, and gardens. Besides this, there is definite and weighty testimony to the effect that the Sparrows, assembling in large flocks, prove very destructive to fields of grain, instances of which were detailed in the Committee's report. We have, then, also to deal with this bird as a menace to agriculture.

In considering the question of a remedy against the threatened undue increase of the Sparrows, the Committee was loath to advise their wholesale slaughter, but would recommend, as tentative measures, the removal of all nesting boxes or other means of protection from parks and gardens; that they should not be fed; that State laws for their protection should be repealed, and that their transportation for introduction to new localities should be prohibited by legislative enactments, fixing a considerable penalty for such offences. In short, the Sparrows should be subjected to the same struggle for existence as our native birds, which their graminivorous habits, fecundity, and hardy nature too well fit them to maintain. The Committee had taken much pains to secure evidence from those who advocated the cause of the Sparrow, yet the testimony gathered showed that its injurious traits greatly overbalance its beneficial qualities, and that the question as to what we are to do with the Sparrow is really one of great importance, the threatening evil being one of serious magnitude.

The Committee 'On Avian Anatomy' being called upon, Dr. Coues (in the absence of the Chairman, Dr. R. W. Shufeldt,) made a brief report of progress, which was accepted and the Committee continued.

Mr. Brewster, speaking in behalf of the Committee on Oölogy (in the absence of the Chairman, Capt. Chas. E. Bendire, U. S. A.), stated that no meetings of the Committee had been held, and no report had been prepared.

The Committee on Faunal Areas being called on, the Chairman, Mr. Allen, presented a report of progress. He stated that the territory of North America had been divided into districts, each of which had been assigned to a member of the Committee to work up, as follows: (1) To Dr. C. Hart Merriam had been allotted Alaska and British North America south to the St. Lawrence River, and the tier of States bordering the Great Lakes. (2) To Mr. Arthur P. Chadbourne, New England, and the British Provinces south of the St. Lawrence. (3) To Dr. A. K. Fisher, the States east of the Mississippi River south of the Ohio, including New Jersey and Pennsylvania. (4) To Dr. E. A. Mearns, U. S. A., the great interior, from the Mississippi westward to (and including) Idaho, Nevada, and Arizona. (5) To Mr. L. Belding, the Pacific Coast region, or the territory west of Dr. Mearns's district. The plan of the Committee contemplates the graphic representation, by means of colored maps, of the distribution of each species of North American bird, in a way not only to show the extent of its distribution in North America north of Mexico, but also its breeding, winter, and migratory ranges, by means of different tints on the same map. All data obtainable from published works are to be fully utilized, and these then supplemented by new data freshly gathered, through personal exploration on the part of the members or by correspondence with local observers. Fortunately for the Committee, the Chairman stated, a plan of coöperation had been agreed upon between this Committee and that on the Migration of Birds, whereby an important contribution of new data would soon become available, the Chairman of the Migration Committee having requested his numerous observers to send in a briefly annotated list of all the birds occurring at each observer's station, for the purpose of turning over the same to the Committee on the Distribution of Birds. The final results of the Committee's work will include not only an extensive series of maps, but a textual report, and a generalized map illustrative of the Faunal Areas.

Dr. Sclater being called upon, as a distinguished student of the geographical distribution of animals, for remarks, said that he was glad to know that North America, which he knew as the Nearctic Region, was being worked in so thorough a manner. The subject was one of great interest, and he thought the

results of the work of this Committee could not fail to be of high importance.

By suggestion of the Chairman, the name of the Committee was changed from a 'Committee on Faunal Areas' to a 'Committee on the Geographical Distribution of North American Birds.' Later, in view of the intimate relation of the work of the two Committees, and the fact that the members of the one were also nearly all members of the other, the two Committees were merged in one under the title of a 'Committee on the Migration and Geographical Distribution of North American Birds,' the original committee on 'Faunal Areas' retaining its organization as a sub-committee of the 'Committee on Migration.'

Mr. Brewster called attention to the wholesale slaughter of birds, particularly of Terns, along our coast for millinery purposes, giving some startling statistics of this destruction, and moved the appointment of a Committee for the protection of North American birds and their eggs against wanton and indiscriminate destruction, the committee to consist of six, with power to increase its number, and to coöperate with other existing protective associations having similar objects in view. After earnest support of the motion by Messrs. Brewster, Chamberlain, Coues, Goss, Merriam, and Sennett, it was unanimously adopted, and the following gentlemen were named as constituting the Committee: William Brewster, H. A. Purdie, George B. Grinnell, Eugene P. Bicknell, William Dutcher, and Frederic A. Ober.

By invitation of the President, Dr. Sclater again addressed the Union, taking for his subject three large and valuable collections of birds, namely that of the Boston Society of Natural History, that of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, and that of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences. He had been pained to find that neither of these collections was in charge of a paid and competent ornithological curator. They each contain type specimens having high value. A grave responsibility rests upon the possessors of type specimens, the loss or injury of such specimens being a great and irreparable loss to science. He hoped that the Council of the American Ornithologists' Union would take such action as would bring the matter in its true light to the attention of the proper authorities.



The third day's session was occupied largely with the report of the Committee on Bird Migration. The Chairman, Dr. Merriam, gave a *résumé* of the character and plan of the work undertaken by the Committee, and presented reports from several of the superintendents of districts in illustration of the method of tabulating the returns received from observers, and also one report showing the final generalized results. He referred to the circular issued by the Committee,\* defining the limits of the districts, thirteen in number, and the duties of the superintendents, and giving instructions as to methods of observation. In order to secure the large number of observers needed for the work, the Chairman wrote personally to 800 editors of newspapers, sending them circulars and asking them to call attention to the character and importance of the work and the need of observers. The press accordingly gave wide currency to the call for aid, abstracts of the circular, and sometimes the circular in full, with favorable editorial comment, being published in several hundred newspapers. This resulted in upwards of 3000 applications to the Committee for circulars of information and instruction, and the enlistment of nearly 700 observers, in addition to the keepers of lighthouses and lightships, raising the total number of observers secured to nearly 1000, distributed as follows: Mississippi Valley District, Professor W. W. Cooke, superintendent, 170; New England District, John H. Sage, superintendent, 142; Atlantic District, Dr. A. K. Fisher, superintendent, 121; Middle-Eastern District, Dr. J. M. Wheaton, superintendent, 90; Quebec and the Maritime Provinces, Montague Chamberlain, superintendent, 56; District of Ontario, Thomas McIlwraith, superintendent, 38; Pacific District, L. Belding, superintendent, 30; Rocky Mountain District, Dr. Edgar A. Mearns, superintendent, 14; Manitoba, Professor W. W. Cooke, superintendent, 10; British Columbia, John Fannin, superintendent, 5; North-West Territories, Ernest E. T. Seaton, superintendent, 5; Newfoundland, James P. Howley, superintendent,—†

The Committee was fortunate in obtaining the coöperation of the Department of Marine and Fisheries of Canada, and of the Lighthouse Board of the United States. By this means it secured the free distribution of upwards of 1200 sets of schedules and

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\* See Auk, I, pp. 71-76.

† Not yet heard from.

circulars to the keepers of lighthouses, lightships, and beacons in the United States and British North America.

The returns thus far received are exceedingly voluminous and of great value. They are so extensive that the Committee finds it utterly impossible to elaborate them without considerable pecuniary aid. To show the nature and extent of the labors of the Committee, reports were presented, prepared by the superintendents, on five well-known species. Several of these reports were read at length. The Committee in submitting their report for acceptance as a report of progress, urged that Congress be memorialized in reference to an appropriation of funds for the continuance of the work and the elaboration of the returns. The Union thereupon instructed the Council to prepare and present a proper memorial to Congress, and also to the Canadian Government, in behalf of the Committee, and to consider what other means could be devised to promote the work.

The report also made reference to the work of the International Congress of Ornithologists, and presented an abstract of its proceedings in relation to the migration of birds at its first meeting held a few months since in Vienna, at which was made a strong appeal for international coöperation throughout the world, through the medium of the various governments, which were urged to appropriate sufficient sums of money for the support of stations and the publication of annual reports of the observations made.

Under a call for the presentation of scientific papers, Dr. Stejneger read a paper on a new subspecies of Ptarmigan from Newfoundland,\* which gave rise to a long and very interesting discussion on the subject of Ptarmigans in general, and incidental questions, participated in by Mr. D. G. Elliot, Dr. Coues, Dr. Merriam, Messrs. Brewster, Comeau, and Ridgway.

Mr. Sage contributed a number of notes on the occurrence of rare birds in Northern New England, and Dr. Merriam reported the recent capture, by Mr. N. A. Comeau, of a second specimen of the Wheatear (*Saxicola ænanthe*) at Godbout, on the northern shore of the mouth of the St. Lawrence River.

The elections of officers for the ensuing year resulted in the unanimous reëlection of the present incumbents.

The next place of meeting being then brought up for consider-

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\* See this Number of The Auk, p. 369.

ation, invitations were announced for the Union to meet at Quebec and Ottawa by Mr. Chamberlain, at Boston by Mr. Brewster, at Washington by Dr. Coues, and at Topeka, Kansas, by Col. Goss. Professor Bickmore, in behalf of the trustees, invited the Union to again meet at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. After some discussion the determination of the next place of meeting was referred to the Council. Resolutions of thanks were then tendered the President and Trustees of the American Museum of Natural History for their kindness in placing at the disposal of the Union the rooms in which its meetings had been held. Also, on behalf of the Committee on Migration, votes of thanks were tendered to Professor S. F. Baird, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, for his kindness in printing for the Committee the schedules for the use of keepers of lights; to the Hon. William Smith, Deputy Minister of Marine and Fisheries of Canada, for his kindness in distributing and collecting the blank schedules and circulars, and for his order making obligatory the filling of said schedules by the keepers of Light Stations in the Dominion; to Major William P. Anderson, C. E., F. R. S. C., of Ottawa, Canada, and to Commander Henry F. Picking, and also to the Press of the United States and Canada, for substantial aid in its work.

The second meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union then adjourned, subject to the call of the President, after a session in every respect satisfactory and profitable.

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## RECENT LITERATURE.

**Brewster on Birds observed in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.\***—In a paper of about fifty pages Mr. Brewster gives the results of observations made during a cruise in the Gulf of St. Lawrence between June 24 and August 1, 1881, in the yacht 'Arethusa,' in company with Professor A. Hyatt, Curator of the Boston Society of Natural History, and his assistant Mr. S. Henshaw, and three students of the Institute of Technology. The principal points visited were the Magdalen Islands, Anticosti, and the Mingan Islands. The list of species observed numbers 92, respecting which are notes varying in length from a few lines to several pages. While the

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\* Notes on the Birds observed during a Summer Cruise in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. By William Brewster. Proc. Boston Soc. Nat. Hist., Vol. XXII, pp. 364-412. (Separates issued July 1, 1884.)