

quality, and not only are these noted by the Indians, but their mythology furnishes them with the exact when and wherefore the particular mark, color, or quality was received. From the white head of the Bald Eagle to the ruby on the head of the Ruby-crowned Wren, or on the throat of the Hummingbird, every characteristic marking is accounted for. It is in the recital of these and kindred tales that the long winter evenings are whiled away, and though one may receive different versions of the same story as told by different persons, they substantially agree.

The etymologies of these animal names are also of peculiar interest, since they well illustrate the primitive methods of word-making.

Indian classification of animals and natural objects is very little understood; and if any ornithologist can work out, for instance, the classes into which the birds known to a certain tribe are thrown, and ascertain the basis for such Indian classification, he will have made an important contribution to our knowledge of the workings of the primitive mind.

Other points of interest in this connection might be mentioned: but enough perhaps has been said to direct the attention of ornithologists to the interest and importance of this kind of work.

Very truly yours,

Washington, D. C.,
August 24, 1884.

H. W. HENSHAW.

A New Element in Diagnosis.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE AUK:—

Sirs: I think it would be advisable for naturalists to give careful attention to the weight of the objects which they study. The descriptive ornithologist delineates the bird in regard to size, the length of body, expanse, wing, tail, tarsus, bill, foot, etc.; respecting the color, he is careful to describe minutely different shades, tints, and stripes, but generally nothing is said of the *weight*.

Of the eggs, the measurements of length and breadth are given, to hundredths of an inch; the color, whether immaculate or spotted, lined or splashed, wreathed or scrawled, the markings regularly or irregularly distributed; the ground-color and markings described to delicate tints and shades—though usually, but not always, the maculates are uniform in substance-color, the differences being due to the deposition of coloring matter at successive stages of shell-formation—but *nothing in regard to the weight of the eggs*.

In birds of the size of the Robin (*Turdus migratorius*), it might not be advisable to express the weight in terms lower than drams, perhaps; in the smaller species the weight should be given in grains, and the larger in ounces and pounds, or their equivalents in the metric system. The weight of the eggs should be expressed in grains, drams and ounces, according to their respective bulk.

This matter would require some skill and expense, and not every

ornithologist is so situated as to attend to the subject, but some could doubtless perform the work with little trouble, and the weight would add much to the stock of knowledge.

Weigh the fresh bird in the flesh when received, making due allowance for the shot in the body; weigh the eggs when they are measured, noting the fact of their freshness or embryonic condition, and weigh the nest when it is ready for the show-case.

The remarks on the subject of *weight* will apply equally to the students of some other branches of natural history; to the mammalogist, the herpetologist, the ichthyologist, and to the entomologist, in a part of their work at least.

Very respectfully,

Somerset, Mass.

ELISHA SLADE.

[The weight of birds would certainly form an item of interest, and the variation in this respect presented by a series of specimens of the same species, taken at the same season, and also at different periods, would add really desirable information; but doubtless the variation, owing to the condition of the specimen as regards fatness or leanness, would be so great that weight would be found to have little diagnostic value.—EDS.]

NOTES AND NEWS.

AMONG the exhibits of the National Museum at the New Orleans Exhibition will be a selected collection of mounted birds, with a series of North American game birds, another of birds beneficial to agriculture, and a third consisting of those known to be injurious, as the leading features. In addition, there will be exhibited groups of the most characteristic birds from each of the great zoögeographical divisions of the earth, as Birds of Paradise, Pittas, and Lories, from New Guinea, Apteryx from New Zealand, Toucans, Macaws, Tanagers and Cotingas from South America, Pheasants from India, Plantain-eaters from Africa, etc., etc. The collection is now being prepared under Mr. Ridgway's direction and will be arranged for exhibition by Dr. Stejneger.

THE bird-collection of the National Museum has increased from 93,091 at the end of 1883 to 100,126 up to Oct. 7, 1884, 7035 specimens having thus been added since January 1. It may be of interest to the readers of 'The Auk' to know that the enumeration of the bird record was begun with 3696 specimens forming Professor Baird's private collection, his catalogue, written in his own hand, forming Volume I of the Museum Register of birds, which now comprises 18 volumes, containing a full record of the immense collection built upon Professor Baird's donation.