

The 'Proceedings' of the U. S. National Museum.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE AUK:—

Sirs:—In the last number of 'The Auk' you charge the 'Proceedings' of the U. S. National Museum with being *antedated*. Allow me to correct the presumption that the date at the bottom of the first page of each signature is "the date of its issuance from the Government Printing Office." The date in question is simply the date of stereotyping the plates, as it very often happens that these are not printed off immediately after casting. In order to avoid confusion in the future, it has been decided, however, to omit the date of stereotyping, and each sheet distributed separately will be stamped with the exact date of publication. In the volume of 'Proceedings' for 1886, there will be found a list of the dates of issuance of each signature, and it is intended to have a similar list accompany each volume in the future.

Yours, very truly,

LEONHARD STEJNEGER.

Smithsonian Institution,

June 9, 1887.

We are glad to learn that the signatures of the 'Proceedings' will in future be stamped with the "date of publication," when sent out separately. The list of dates of issuance of the signatures of the volume for 1886 has come to hand, and will be of permanent value. The "date of stereotyping" certainly had the appearance of being the date of publication, and with nothing to indicate the contrary, would naturally be so taken, and, to our knowledge, has been so understood.—EDD.]

NOTES AND NEWS.

THE American Museum of Natural History, of New York City, has recently received several important additions to the Department of Ornithology. One of the most important of these is the acquisition of Mr. D. G. Elliot's almost unrivalled collection of Hummingbirds, numbering over 400 species, represented by about 2000 specimens, and including some fifty or more types. Its importance is further enhanced from its having formed the basis of Mr. Elliot's recent monograph of the family. It doubtless ranks as second in the world in point of completeness, or next to that of the British Museum. This collection is a gift from Mr. Elliot, whose unflinching interest in the Museum has been manifested on many occasions, by valuable donations and important services.

Another invaluable accession is the addition, by purchase, of Mr. George N. Lawrence's collection of American birds, numbering about 3000

species and including some 300 types. This collection is the gathering of a lifetime by a veteran ornithologist, and consists largely of specimens identified by the highest authorities, much of the material having passed through the hands of specialists. The collection contains not only a nearly full series of North American birds, including many specimens of historic interest, but also about two-thirds of all the known species of Mexico, the West Indies, Central America, and South America. It includes the types of nearly all the many species described by Mr. Lawrence, and as a reference collection will prove of the highest value. The Museum is especially to be congratulated on securing a collection of such rare scientific importance.

A further important addition consists of a collection of 4000 bird skins, about 150 clutches of well-identified eggs (generally with the nests), and several hundred bird sterna, from the Province of Matto Grosso, Brazil, purchased of Mr. Herbert H. Smith (see *Auk*, IV, p. 84). This collection numbers about 300 species, including many of special interest, and doubtless, when fully worked up, will yield some novelties. In many instances the suites show the changes of plumage from the nestling bird to maturity.

While these three collections add vastly to the scientific resources of the ornithological department of the Museum, a very noteworthy addition has been made to the exhibition series of birds, consisting of eighteen very elaborate 'Group Pieces.' These are arranged in twelve cases placed in the alcoves of the 'Bird Floor', and illustrate in a striking manner the nesting habits of the species represented. Each group consists of a pair of birds, with their nest and eggs, surrounded by their original accessories, varying, according to the species, from a bit of salt marsh, pasture, or a woodland bank, to a full-blown apple bough or cherry sapling. In case of the bush- or tree-nesting species, the nest has been left *in situ*, the foliage and the blossoms of the bush or branch being reproduced in *fac simile* from nature; in the ground-nesting species the nest has been taken, with a square yard of the sod on which it rested, to the Museum, the grass and other plants growing thereon remaining intact, and the perishable parts faithfully reproduced in detail exactly as in life, thus giving results eminently realistic. The modelling of the plants has been done by Mrs. E. S. Mogridge, aided by her brother Mr. Mintern, both formerly of the South Kensington Museum of England, the celebrated bird groups of that institution being also the work of their skilful hands. The careful and laborious gathering of the material, the designing of the groups as to special effect in each case, and the general ground-work, is the work of Mr. Jenness Richardson, who has displayed excellent taste and skill in his share of the details.

To Morris K. Jesup, Esq., President of the American Museum, is due the idea of reproducing here groups similar to those of the South Kensington Museum, while the Museum is indebted to the generosity of Mrs. Robert E. Stuart for the means to carry it into effect. Through her liberality the work will be continued, and some twenty or more groups added the present year. The unrestricted means available for the work permits the attainment of finer results than have ever before been attempted, and

which, so far as this country is concerned, are unique. To the general public these 'Bird Groups' are eminently attractive and instructive.

The efficiency of the Department of Ornithology has recently been further greatly enhanced by the purchase of Mr. D. G. Elliot's ornithological library, consisting of about 1000 volumes, selected with great care as to their utility, and embracing many of exceptional rarity. Its purchase goes far toward placing the library of the American Museum in the front rank of American libraries as regards works relating to ornithology. The Elliot library is a gift to the Museum from two of its trustees, Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt and Mr. Percy R. Pyne.

IN the April number of 'The Auk,' it was stated that the unrivalled collection of Ohio birds formed by the late Dr. J. M. Wheaton, had been placed in the State University. We have since been authoritatively informed that this statement is incorrect. Our informant writes: "The Doctor's collection of bird skins is not now and never has been at the Ohio State University, but is, as it always has been, in the Doctor's house. It was his intention to place them in trust in one of the City Parks—the 'Franklin'—on condition that a suitable place be constructed to display them and take proper care of them. With the usual shortsightedness, the great probability is that no provision will be made for this trust, and that this invaluable collection will be allowed to go from Columbus. There are about a thousand specimens, representing all of the Ohio fauna, together with many foreign species. As every ornithologist knows, this collection can never be duplicated."

THE 'Transactions' of the Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club are now issued monthly under the title 'The Ottawa Naturalist,' the first number of which bears date April, 1887. Besides the usual papers, reports, and record of proceedings, it will contain "an account of each general meeting, soiree, class, excursion, sub-excursion, or other undertaking of the Club."

IT is announced that 'The Ornithologist and Oölogist,' beginning with the July issue, "will pass into the possession of the Bristol Ornithological Club," of which it will be "the official publication." Mr. Frank B. Webster, 409 Washington St., Boston, will remain its publisher.

FROM a private letter of an ornithologist, recently in Florida, we select the following suggestive reference to the destruction of Herons in Florida: "Plumc hunters have destroyed about all the Florida 'Rookeries.' I saw one whole wagon load of the scapular plumes of *Ardea wardi*, at one point. It is a burning shame, and it would make your heart ache to hear the wails of the starving young birds whose parents have been killed. Two years more of the present work and *Ardea wardi*, as well as the large and small Egrets, will be as scarce as *A. wuerdemanni* is now. Cannot something be done to stop such wicked slaughter?"