

the work, or flying to and fro overhead, keeping up their continual cries from sunrise to sunset. At low tide they congregated along the beach in search of food, or sunned themselves from the tops of the large boulders. I have observed them at times following up and feeding on the schools of mackerel, which is certainly a beautiful sight, reminding one, as they dodge about each other, of a kaleidoscope in rotation.

The five weeks which I spent on the island, from August 26 to October 1, inclusive, being after the breeding season had closed, my information has been carefully collected from a large number of persons whose statements I have no reason to doubt, and who were not only eye witnesses, but participants in the spoils.

I am also informed by good authority that the Government intends erecting another gun on the east end of the island; if such be the case, it will consume all the earth from the remaining portions of the island, to form the breastworks, which will virtually leave nothing of Great Gull Island beyond the fortifications, and will completely destroy it as a resort for Terns.



FIFTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION.

THE FIFTEENTH CONGRESS of the American Ornithologists' Union was held in New York City, November 8-11, 1897. The business meeting took place on the evening of November 8 in the 'Board Room' of the American Museum of Natural History. The public sessions, lasting three days, were held in the Library of the Museum.

BUSINESS SESSION. — The meeting was called to order by Vice-President Dr. C. Hart Merriam, in the absence of the President, Mr. William Brewster. Eighteen Active Members were present. The Secretary's report gave the membership of the Union at the opening of the present Congress as 679, constituted as follows: Active, 46; Honorary, 18; Corresponding, 68; Associate, 547.

During the year the Union lost sixty-two members — seven by death, thirteen by resignation and forty-two were dropped for non-payment of dues. The members lost by death were Heinrich Gätke¹, an Honorary Member, who died on the Island of Heligoland, January 1, 1897, aged 83 years; and Maj. Charles E. Bendire, U. S. A.,² one of the Founders, an Active Member, and a Councillor, who died at Jacksonville, Fla., February 4, 1897, aged 61. Also the following Associates: Capt. Platte M. Thorne, U. S. A.,³ who died in Rochester, N. Y., March 16, 1897, aged 59; Robert Hoe Lawrence,⁴ who died at Danville, Ill., April 27, 1897, aged 35; Charles Bill, of Springfield, Mass., who died in April, 1897; Louis W. Brokaw, who died at Carmel, Ind., September 3, 1897; and Robert A. Campbell of Phoenix, Arizona, particulars of whose death have not yet been received.

The report of the Treasurer showed the finances of the Union to be in good condition.

The officers of the previous year were all re-elected, with Mr. Ruthven Deane as a member of the Council, to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Maj. Bendire. Dr. Charles W. Richmond, Assistant Curator, Department of Ornithology, U. S. National Museum, was elected an Active Member, and eighty-eight new members were added to the list of Associates. As a direct result of the Audubon Society movement, creating a popular interest in the study of birds, more women than usual were elected to associate membership. The usual reports of Standing Committees were received.

PUBLIC SESSION. *First Day.* — The meeting was called to order by Vice-President Merriam. Dr. J. A. Allen read a letter from Mr. Morris K. Jesup, President of the American Museum, welcoming the Union to the Museum.

The reading of scientific papers began with one by Mr. Sylvester D. Judd on 'Protective Adaptations of Insects from an Ornitho-

¹ For an obituary notice, see Auk, XIV, p. 254.

² For an obituary notice, see *Ibid.*, p. 253; also Memorial Address in the present number.

³ For an obituary notice, see *Ibid.*, pp. 254-255.

⁴ For an obituary notice see *Ibid.*, p. 342.

logical Point of View.' Remarks followed by Drs. Allen and Fisher, the author, and the Chair.

Next came a commemorative address prepared by Dr. J. C. Merrill, U. S. A., entitled 'In Memoriam: Charles Emil Bendire.' In the absence of the author, it was read by Mr. D. G. Elliot.

The third title was 'Summer Birds of the West Virginia Spruce Belt,' by Dr. William C. Rives. Remarks followed by Dr. Coues, Messrs. J. A. Dakin, S. N. Rhoads, and the author.

The opening paper of the afternoon session was by Frank M. Chapman, entitled 'Experiences of an Ornithologist in Mexico.' Remarks followed by Messrs. Elliot, Nelson, Oberholser, and the author. The members and visitors then repaired to the Lecture Room of the Museum, where Mr. Chapman illustrated the preceding paper by lantern slides showing characteristic scenes of the life-zones of the State of Vera Cruz. Mr. Chapman then gave an exhibition of lantern slides of 'Birds in Nature' from material contributed by himself and other members of the Union. This was followed by Professor A. S. Bickmore, with colored lantern slides showing recent advances in methods of visual instruction.

Second Day. — The meeting was called to order by Vice-President Merriam. The Secretary read a letter from the President, Mr. Brewster, who regretted that ill health prevented his attendance at the Congress.

Dr. Jonathan Dwight, Jr., gave, as the first paper of the morning, 'Is Uniformity in Local Lists Possible?' It was discussed by Drs. Faxon and Allen, Messrs. Baskett, Oberholser, and the author.

The second title was 'Auduboniana and other Matters of present Interest,' by Dr. Elliott Coues. The portfolio carried by John James Audubon in Europe and America, and the original MS. of the first volume of his 'Ornithological Biography' were exhibited by Dr. Coues. Two original bird-drawings by John Woodhouse Audubon, and some unpublished paintings of birds by Louis Agassiz Fuertes were also shown.

The next paper was 'Ten days among the Birds of Northern New Hampshire,' by Judge John N. Clark. Remarks followed by Mr. William L. Baily.

The fourth title was 'Some Notes on Liberian Birds,' by Harry C. Oberholser.

The first paper of the afternoon was 'The Great Roosts on Gabberet Island, opposite North St. Louis,' by Otto Widmann. In the absence of the author, it was read by Mr. Dutcher, who also remarked upon the paper.

The next title was 'The Terns of Gull Island, New York,' by J. Harris Reed. As the author was not present, the paper was read by Mr. Dutcher. Remarks followed by Messrs. Dutcher and Chapman.

The third paper, 'The Petrels of Southern California,' by A. W. Anthony, was read in his absence by Mr. Chapman. Remarks followed by Messrs. Chapman and Osgood, and Dr. Bishop.

Then followed a paper by Rev. H. K. Job, entitled 'The Northern Raven breeding in New England.' In the absence of the author it was read by Mr. W. H. Osgood.

Mr. Chapman gave further information regarding some of the slides shown by him on the previous day.

The fifth title was the 'Breeding Habits of the Common Robin in Eastern Massachusetts,' by Reginald Heber Howe, Jr. The author not being present the paper was read by Mr. Harry C. Oberholser. Remarks followed by Messrs. J. Newton Baskett and Louis Agassiz Fuyertes.

Mr. Abbott H. Thayer, the eminent portrait painter, then gave an out-of-door demonstration of the underlying principle of protective coloration, in continuation of his remarks on the subject at the previous Congress. Mr. Thayer showed a pair of decoys with the belly part cut off, so that in lying on the cut-off side they represented crouching birds or mammals. He then repeated upon them the coloring which he had exhibited at Cambridge upon entire decoys (decoys poised a few inches above the ground). This, he said, was to more clearly illustrate what he stated in his first paper on protective coloration, namely, that the normal gradation of the sky's lighting is effaced *by the color gradation of the animal at every point*, the median dorsal line having the darkest markings, so that the gradation toward the white of the belly *begins close to this dorsal line*. Mr. Thayer placed the two decoys side by side on a plank, and covered one of them uniformly with the same dry earth which he spread about it on the plank, so that all of its visible surface and that of the plank on which it

lay were absolutely of one tint — monochrome; yet it was conspicuously visible at a long distance, because of its normal gradation of shading from the sky's light, although there was no underside visible to show a culmination of shadow. The other decoy he painted in imitation of a hare's or snipe's gradation, and so successfully that it became totally invisible at a distance of four or five yards. He explained that the statement in his first paper that not a feather of the upper surfaces of the woodcock and grouse had been artificially colored referred only to the feathers along the median dorsal region.

The skin of a cottontail rabbit was exhibited, showing a most perfect gradation from black hairs of the middle of the back and over the shoulders to the white of the belly.

This communication, in connection with that given at Cambridge a year ago, completes Mr. Thayer's admirable demonstration of his theory of the great underlying principle of protective coloration in animals.

In the evening an illustrated lecture on 'A Naturalist's Expedition to East Africa' was given in the large lecture hall of the Museum by Mr. D. G. Elliot before an audience of some 1200 persons.

Third Day.— In the absence of the President and both Vice-Presidents, the meeting was called to order by the Secretary. Ex-President Allen was made Chairman *pro tem.* Before proceeding to the reading of papers, resolutions were adopted thanking the Trustees of the American Museum of Natural History for a place of meeting and for other courtesies tendered to the Union; and to the Linnæan Society of New York for generous hospitalities extended to the Union during its Fifteenth Congress.

The first paper of the morning was by Edwin I. Haines on 'The Summer Birds of the Catskill Mountains, with remarks upon the Faunæ of the Region.' Discussion followed by Messrs. Elliot, Dutcher, and Batchelder, Drs. Coues and Dwight, and the author.

The second paper was 'The Terns of Muskeget Island, Mass.,' by George H. Mackay. In the absence of the author, it was read by Mr. Dutcher. Remarks followed by Mr. Fuertes.

The third title was 'Remarks on an Exhibition of certain

Laridæ,' by Dr. Elliott Coues. Discussion followed by Messrs. Dutcher, Elliot, Fuertes, and the author.

As the opening paper of the afternoon, Mr. William Dutcher, Chairman of the 'Committee on Protection of North American Birds,' read the report of his committee for the past year. The report is published in this number of 'The Auk,' and will be issued separately as a pamphlet for free distribution.

The next title was 'Remarks on a New Theory of the Origin of Bird Migration,' by Dr. J. A. Allen. Discussion followed by Dr. Coues, Mr. Dutcher, and the author.

Dr. Jonathan Dwight, Jr., showed a specimen of a Petrel (*Puffinus assimilis*) new to North America. Remarks followed by Dr. Coues.

An informal talk on the Gyrfalcons was given by Mr. Chapman, who exhibited specimens from Greenland and Labrador. Remarks followed by Dr. W. E. Hughes, who accompanied the first Peary expedition to North Greenland.

The Union then adjourned to meet in Washington, D. C., November 14, 1898.

JNO. H. SAGE, *Secretary.*

Portland, Conn., Nov. 30, 1897.