

The paper as a whole is a most important contribution to our knowledge of the natural history of two previously very little known areas. — J. A. A.

Verrill's 'The Story of the Cahow.'¹—When the Bermudas were first visited by Europeans, about three hundred years ago (1593 and later), they were without human inhabitants, but were the resort of immense numbers of seabirds, notably of Terns and Shearwaters, doubtless several species of each, and, among other birds, by the 'Cahow,' of which we have only the imperfect accounts left us by the first visitors to these islands. These, quoted at length by Professor Verrill, fail to give us a very satisfactory description of the bird, but sufficient to show that it could not be any species known to science. It was a migratory bird, which came to the islands in October in great abundance, and left in June, depositing its single large white egg in a burrow in the sand, in December and January. Its flesh was described as excellent, "and for that reason it was captured at night in large numbers, while its eggs were constantly gathered for food." From these facts Professor Verrill argues that it could not have been a shearwater, with which some writers have identified it, as these birds do not breed till March or April, even in the West Indies, and their flesh is oily and nauseating, and their eggs musky and inedible. Nor could it be any species of gull or tern, which also breed late and lay spotted eggs. It is described as of the size of a pigeon, with a strong hooked bill, a russet brown back, white belly, and russet and white wing-quills. Concerning its affinities Verrill says: "There is no known living bird that agrees with it in these several characters. Most certainly it could not have been a shearwater, nor any member of the petrel family, all of which have such a disagreeable flavor that neither their flesh nor their eggs are edible. It seems to me far more probable that it was allied to the auks (*Alcidæ*), many of which burrow in the ground and lay white, edible eggs. The northern auks have also edible flesh and often a strong hooked bill. But no existing species breeds so far south, nor do they breed in winter. The Cahow may have spent the summer in the southern hemisphere, but possibly it was an arctic bird that produced a southern brood in winter. Or it may possibly have been a localized pelagic species, coming to the land only for breeding purposes."

So many of the birds and their eggs were gathered for food that as early as 1616 they had declined so greatly in numbers that a law was passed, "but overlate," "against the spoyle and havock of the cahowes, and other birds, which were almost all of them killed and scared away very improvidently by fire, diggeinge, stoneinge, and all kinds of murtherings." Doubtless the cahows were not long after wholly exterminated.

¹ The Story of the Cahow. The Mysterious Extinct Bird of the Bermudas. By Professor A. E. Verrill, Yale University. Popular Science Monthly, Vol. LX, Nov., 1901, pp. 22-30.

Professor Verrill has located, from these early narratives, some of the breeding places—on some of the smaller outlying islands of the group,—but lack of time prevented any very thorough search for their bones, which he thinks may be found on Castle Island, Southampton Island, and Cooper Island, the latter being in his opinion the most favorable site for such discovery. Here then is another ‘ornithological mystery’ worthy of further investigation.—J. A. A.

Palmer and Old’s ‘Digest of Game Laws for 1901.’¹—This important ‘bulletin’ presents in convenient form the provisions of the Federal, State and Provincial laws now in force for the protection of game and birds, including the amendments enacted by the various legislatures in 1901. It consists, first (pp. 11–68) of a ‘general discussion of game laws,’ including restrictions as to time, methods, and purposes of killing game, and the manner of its shipment; and, second (pp. 69–148), abstracts of the laws, with special reference to the shipment and sale of game. “The opening year of the new century has witnessed an unprecedented interest in game protection. Nearly four-fifths of the States and Territories have enacted some amendments to their game laws.... Changes in dates for opening or closing the seasons have been very general, but restrictions on methods of capture, on sale, shipment and storage, have also been numerous. In many instances the laws have necessarily become more complex, but there has been a strong tendency toward extending protection to more kinds of game, shortening seasons, limiting bags, and throwing greater restrictions about the trade in game.” It is therefore of the highest importance to have for handy reference a practically complete digest of all the laws relating to the capture, shipment, and sale of game, in the interest not only of sportsmen, but of the increasing number of persons who take an interest in game protection. The importance of the subject is rapidly becoming more and more recognized by the general public, which in itself gives great encouragement to the promoters of intelligent protection for both game and non-game birds.—J. A. A.

Judd’s ‘The Relation of Sparrows to Agriculture.’²—The results are here given of a very detailed and thoroughly scientific investigation of the food habits of the native sparrows of eastern North America, with

¹ *Digest of Game Laws for 1901.* By T. S. Palmer and H. W. Olds, Assistants, Biological Survey. Prepared under the direction of Dr. C. Hart Merriam, Chief of Biological Survey. Bull. No. 16, U. S. Depart. Agric., Division of Biological Survey, 1901. Pp. 152, and 8 maps and diagrams.

² *The Relation of Sparrows to Agriculture.* By Sylvester D. Judd, Ph. D., Assistant, Biological Survey. Prepared under the direction of Dr. C. Hart Merriam, Chief of Biological Survey. Bull. No. 15, U. S. Dept. Agric., Division of Biological Survey, 1901. 8vo, pp. 98, pl. 4, and 19 text figures.