

niculus, and *Ammodromus* — three of them proposed by Swainson in 1827, is less easily decided, although Mr. Oberholser considers that they "must apparently be changed." He accordingly proceeds to transfer the currently recognized species of *Dendrornis* Eyton to *Xiphorhynchus*, and to replace the superceded *Dendrornis* by the new name *Xiphornis*; *Vermivora* is made to replace *Helminthophila*; *Coturniculus* is replaced by *Ammodramus*, and a new name, *Ammospiza*, is provided for the group currently known as *Ammodromus*. As stated elsewhere (*antea*, pp. 400-407), we consider these changes unfortunate and undesirable, because unnecessary.—J. A. A.

Forbush on the Decrease of Birds and Means for their Protection. — In a 'Special Report' of more than a hundred pages, made under the direction of the Massachusetts State Board of Agriculture,¹ Mr. Forbush has compiled a mass of information on this subject of the utmost interest and importance. It is based largely upon replies to circulars sent out in July, 1903, to naturalists and other intelligent observers, soliciting information regarding the decrease of birds in Massachusetts. Information of more or less value was thus obtained from 217 correspondents. An analysis of these reports, as presented by Mr. Forbush, indicates a great decrease in the number of game birds, especially water-fowl and shore birds, and also in most of the birds of prey, while most of the insectivorous and song birds have well held their own, with local fluctuations in numbers, for the most part readily explained.

The subject matter of the Report is well arranged, and the evidence is presented with fairness, unbiased by sentiment or any evident desire to make out a case. In reference to the destruction of birds by the elements, with special reference to the unusual weather of 1903-04 — the June rain-storms of 1903 and the severe winter following — it is gratifying to find that while many species suffered severely, only the Purple Martin appears to have met with a "lasting or permanent check." Regarding the general subject, the "expert evidence," or the testimony of competent observers, is summarized by counties, and the conclusion therefrom is "that with the smaller species the natural balance of bird-life is now fairly constant in Massachusetts and the neighboring States." The birds reported as diminishing in numbers are then taken up by families, beginning with the Grebes, and the evidence presented, contrasting present with former conditions. Among the water birds, as the gulls, terns, ducks and geese, some species have suffered great decrease, although many of the ducks

¹ Special Report on the Decrease of certain Birds, and its Causes, with Suggestions for Bird Protection. By Edward Howe Forbush. Prepared under the direction of the Massachusetts State Board of Agriculture. Fifty-second Ann. Rep. Massachusetts State Board of Agric., pp. 429-543. with 2 pll. 1905.

appear to have well maintained themselves; which, however, is not the case with the shore birds (*Limicolæ*), which have nearly all decreased greatly in number. Those now considered common were formerly abundant, as were some that are now rare or casual, some of the larger species having become nearly exterminated or driven off the coast.

In regard to the cause of this decrease, it is "evident that man and his works are of the most importance." The first rank is given to sportsmen, or 'so-called sportsmen,' the second to "Italians and other foreigners"; market hunters rank third, and bird shooters and trappers fourth; while the clearing and draining of land, and other modern improvements, directly or indirectly contribute a smaller and for the most part non-preventable share. Detailed statements of facts well indicate the rôle respectively enacted by these agencies.

Considerable space is given to a consideration of the natural enemies of birds, as cats and dogs, foxes, skunks, weasels, crows, jays, and the English Sparrow — last but not least, although "it is well that the fox and crow are not protected by law," in proof of which Mr. Forbush gives abundant evidence.

Finally suggestions are made for the better protection of birds, which include educational work, the improvement and better enforcement of the laws, and "*control of the cat*," which is admitted by all careful observers to be one of the worst enemies of wild birds.

Mr. Forbush's 'Special Report,' taken all in all, is one of the most judicial, instructive, and important publications in the interest of bird protection that has yet appeared, and should have the widest possible circulation.—J. A. A.

Palmer on Game Protection.—In a recent paper of twelve pages Dr. T. S. Palmer recounts 'Some Benefits the Farmer may derive from Game Protection.'¹ These are security against trespass on the part of hunters; a check on hunting, through the requirement in a number of States of a hunting license, thus checking the number of would-be hunters roaming at will over a State; giving the land owner the right to eject trespassers and to collect damages for injury to his property; the protection of useful birds, as the insectivorous and seed-eating species; protection against the introduction of injurious species of mammals and birds; financial benefits, arising from the sale of live game for propagating purposes, and the lease of hunting privileges, etc. Each of these is explained and its advantages commented on at length.

Another paper by Dr. Palmer relating to the protection of game and birds is a 'Directory of State Officials and Organizations concerned with the Protection of Birds and Game.'² This gives a list of the State

¹ Yearbook of U. S. Department of Agriculture for 1904, pp. 509-520.

² 'Circular No. 50' of the Bureau of Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture. 8vo, pp. 16. Revised to Aug. 15, 1905.