

CORRESPONDENCE.

New Edition of Ridgway's 'Nomenclature of Colors.'

TO THE EDITORS OF 'THE AUK':—

Dear Sirs.—Probably some of the readers of 'The Auk' are aware that I have been engaged, as opportunity allowed, on a new and greatly improved edition of my 'Nomenclature of Colors' (1886). I am happy to be able to announce that after twenty years of necessarily intermittent labor this most difficult and tedious task has at last been accomplished and arrangements made for its early publication, the plates being already in process of reproduction.

The new work will present nearly 1350 colors, arranged scientifically, and reproduced by a method which guarantees a faithful copy of the originals as to hue and tone, absolute uniformity throughout the entire edition, and at the same time as great a degree of permanency as is possible with pigments now known to colorists. The standards of the original work are of course retained, and as many additional colors are named as is practicable. Obviously it is impossible to provide names for all of so large a number of colors, but those which are left unnamed may be easily designated by an exceedingly simple system of symbols, as may also the intermediates, both as to hue and tone — rendering the work practically equivalent to the actual presentation of more than 5300 named or otherwise designable color-samples. In short, the work has been so carefully planned and executed that I have no doubt as to its adequacy to meet all the demands of naturalists and others who have use for a comprehensive color nomenclature and standards. The book will be the same size (except for slightly greater thickness, there being 64 plates instead of the 10 of the old edition) and will sell for about \$5.00 net, or only \$1.00 more than the original work.

Very truly yours,

ROBERT RIDGWAY.

Washington,
Sept. 9th, 1909.

Avian Osteology and Game Bird Protection.

EDITORS OF 'THE AUK':—

Dear Sirs:— When one has brought to his attention in a practical way, be it a law, a practice, or a method, anything that tends to give more effective protection to our different species of game birds, it must be believed that it requires no apology to the readers of 'The Auk' in general or to Bird Protection Organizations in particular, to invite their attention to the facts in these pages. Now almost any ornithologist would be kept a guessing as to how, in any possible manner, a knowledge of the osteology

of birds could, through the remotest sort of an operation, be employed as a means whereby the various methods in vogue to protect our game birds would, thanks to such a knowledge, have added to them another process, the application of which tends not only to aid in such protection, but at the same time place the offenders in a position where they may be readily apprehended and be made to suffer the penalties of the laws on the subject. During the times of publication of my various memoirs upon the osteology of game birds in general no such possible use of the facts and information therein set forth ever entered my mind for an instant, and, indeed, it was not until a few years ago when, through a practical demonstration of it, the value of the practice, here to be briefly described, became apparent to me. There is one point which will not be necessary to touch upon here, for every game bird protectionist is more or less familiar with the nature of the heavy fines the law imposes upon all hotel and restaurant keepers for serving to their patrons such birds out of season, or even having them at such times in their possession. In fact the law applies to any one so offending. Well and good, the law is one thing, while to detect, apprehend and punish such offenders is quite another thing, and usually a feat of unusual difficulty in its accomplishment. The Forest, Fish and Game Commission of New York had found it so for years. No method had ever occurred to them by means of which apprehension and punishment of the culprits could be made certain. The great hotels and wealthy restaurants smiled and all over the city violated the law every day with impunity, and numerous markets supplied the demand, and wild turkeys, grouse, quail, woodcock, snipe and the rest were being sold to them quite regardless of the law. Detectives, both men and women,—the best known in the State,—are employed with the view of detecting the law's violators. They resort to the aforesaid hotels and restaurants, even late at night in evening dress, and, out of season, order such birds to be served to them. The sometimes unsuspecting hosts and their waiters, after certain, what they considered to be, the necessary precautionary preliminaries, serve "the real thing." But these detectives are not ornithologists, much less avian ornithotomists, and therefore are subject to being only too often readily deceived, and thus get the Commission into trouble through making false charges. Later on it occurs to them, when not observed by the waiters at the tables they occupy, to slip the bones of the birds served to them into convenient pockets. At the offices of the Commission these bones are carefully preserved in separate boxes, with numbers and dates upon them, with other required data. Except sometimes in the case of woodcock, the heads and feet are never secured, while sterna, pelves, ribs and other bones are commonly so obtained. But what to do with this material, that's the question. Everything renders the solution pressing and therefore at last the suggestion materializes. Send for a 'bone-sharp.' The worthy President of the National Association of the Audubon Societies recommends one, and, without an idea of what is required of him this expert in due course finds himself alone with the

Game Protector, behind closed doors at the offices of the Commission. They are seated and facing each other. One of the aforesaid boxes, with a certain air of mystery, and perhaps grave doubts on the part of the Protector as to the result, is produced, and its contents spread out upon a sheet of paper before the expert. An examination something after the following order ensues:—

Protector:— Can you tell me what these are?

Expert:— Certainly, they are the bones of some bird or other.

Protector (evidently encouraged):— Yes?— and supposing they are, can you tell me, as to the *species* of bird they probably belonged to?

Expert:— Certainly, I can do better than that, for I can state positively that they belonged to some species, or subspecies perhaps, of an American quail of the genus *Colinus*.

Protector (showing marked astonishment):— Could you demonstrate that fact to a judge and jury and swear to it as a witness in a court?

Expert:— Yes, certainly, provided the State makes it worth my while.

Protector (producing another box):— What would you say of this bone?

Expert:— It is part of a sternum of a grouse,— probably a *Bonasa*; I could make absolutely certain by comparing it with material in my own possession.

Protector:— And this?

Expert:— Proximal half of a humerus of a domestic fowl,— chicken — let me see,— yes, the left one.

Protector:— There is a big case, and a big question to be decided here; can you make enlarged drawings of these bones? Are you a good demonstrator? Do you become “rattled” in court? Can you name the bones of *any* fowl, game or domestic one, as easily as you have these?

Expert:— Better try me! No, I’m not perturbed in court (!), and some of these bones I can correctly pass upon in the dark by digital examination alone.

Protector:— Thank you,— that will do. You will hear from me later.

Now when such testimony as this is brought before judge and jury in a court, backed by the material and the affidavits of the detectives or their testimony as witnesses, there can be but one decision,— a verdict for the State. And, when the fines may run all the way from \$500.00 to \$4500.00 it is certain of having its influence in the matter of the protection of our game birds. Such methods should be encouraged in every possible way, and pushed to the very limit of their usefulness. Woodcock especially stand in need of just such additional protection to prevent their utter extinction.

Very faithfully yours,

R. W. SHUFELDT.

Washington, D. C.
14th Aug., 1909.