

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### 'Concealing Coloration.'

EDITORS OF 'THE AUK,'

*Dear Sirs:* — In your most gratifying review of our book, 'Concealing Coloration,' there is only one thing that I could care to amend, and that is the share in the authorship allotted to my son Gerald H. Thayer.

Being more indebted to him for writing this book than I can ever repay, and he being a professional writer, I owe it to him to make it clearly understood that while with only secondary exceptions the book's *material* is mine, yet the whole book *as a book* — its scheme and every sentence in it (except, of course, the passages signed by me, which owe much to his revision) — is entirely his. But for him I could not only never have found time and energy to produce any book at all, but could not in any literary sense have at all equalled this one.

Sincerely yours,

ABBOTT H. THAYER.

Monadnock, N. H.,  
May 20, 1910.

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## NOTES AND NEWS.

ALEXANDER O'DRISCOLL TAYLOR, an Associate of the American Ornithologists' Union since 1888, died at his home in Newport, Rhode Island, on April 10, 1910, in the seventy-ninth year of his age, after a short illness from pneumonia. He was born in Cork, Ireland, January 2, 1832, and came to this country in 1883. He soon after became disbursing agent of the survey for the Northern Pacific Railroad, and later was connected for a time with the United States Geological Survey. He engaged in the real estate business in Newport in 1885, and for twenty-five years was active in the business, municipal, and educational interests of the city of his adoption. He was deeply interested in natural history, being a well-informed amateur in various lines, especially in ornithology. He took a very active part in the work of the Newport Natural History Society, of which he was curator in 1885–1887, secretary in 1888, and president from 1889 till his decease. He was also the head of the Rhode Island Game Commission, a devoted champion of bird protection, and did much to popularize the study of natural history. He is survived by two sons and a daughter.

THE next Stated Meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union will be held in Washington, D. C., beginning Monday, November 14, 1910, this being the date selected by the Local Committee, to whom the matter was referred by the Union.

THE new edition of the American Ornithologists' Union Check-List of North American Birds, which has been some four years in preparation, will probably be ready for distribution about the end of July. It will differ in several respects from the previous editions, both typographically and in the character of the matter. The arrangement and numeration, however, will be the same. The changes in nomenclature have already been announced in the various supplements that have been issued since the publication of the second edition in 1895, so that in this respect there will be few surprises. The 'ranges,' or the matter relating to the geographical distribution of the species and subspecies, have, however, been entirely rewritten and greatly amplified, thus fully reflecting the latest knowledge of the subject. Besides being given in greater detail and with more definiteness, they are arranged to show not only the general range of the forms, but also the breeding and winter ranges, so far as these are at present known. We hence feel sure that the vast amount of work expended in the preparation of this new edition will be greatly appreciated by future users of the Check-List, of which a more detailed analysis, and comparison with previous editions, will be given later.

An abbreviated edition of the Check-List, consisting only of the English and technical names, numbered in accordance with the numeration of the previous editions of the Check-List, is in preparation and will be issued at about the same time as the regular edition. It will be of small size, with rounded corners and flexible covers, and thus handy for the pocket, and be printed on only one side of the leaf, thereby providing convenient space for annotations.

READERS of 'The Auk' will be interested to learn that through the liberality of Mrs. E. H. Harriman an endowment has been established to provide Dr. C. Hart Merriam with a liberal income and a fund for general expenses to enable him hereafter to devote his time entirely to scientific work untrammelled by official routine. Doctor Merriam has long had in contemplation the preparation of a work on the mammals of North America, the completion of which has been delayed by pressure of official work. The establishment of this endowment makes it certain that the appearance of the first volumes of the series will not be long delayed. The resignation of Doctor Merriam as Chief of the Biological Survey took effect June 1, and Mr. H. W. Henshaw has been appointed his successor, with Dr. T. S. Palmer as Assistant Chief.

In order that the fruits of Doctor Merriam's experience and long field work may not be wholly lost to the Department, which he has served for

25 years, Doctor Merriam will still retain an official connection with the Survey under the title of Consulting Biologist.

We have the assurance that under the new regime the work of the Biological Survey will be conducted along practically the same lines as in the past.

MR. WILLIAM DUTCHER, President of the National Association of Audubon Societies, sailed on May 17 for Europe, to attend the Fifth International Ornithological Congress held in Berlin May 30 to June 4. It was his purpose to present to the Bird Protection section of the Congress a plan for an international organization for the conservation of wild bird and animal life. Mr. Dutcher was also the accredited representative of the United States Government, the Smithsonian Institution, the U. S. National Museum, and the American Ornithologists' Union to the Congress, and empowered by the latter to extend a cordial invitation to the Congress to hold its next session (in 1915) in Washington. It was decided, however, we are informed, to hold it at Serajevo, in Bosnia.

IN OUR reference to the Smithsonian Expedition to East Africa in a former issue of this journal (April, 1909, p. 220), it was said that under such a leader as Colonel Roosevelt, and with the support of such an able staff as Dr. Mearns, and Messrs. Heller and Loring, and barring accident and illness, "the results of the year's work in British East Africa . . . should be of the greatest scientific importance and bring to this country a greatly needed collection of the leading forms of the vertebrate life of a region at present poorly represented in American Museums." In recording the safe return of all the members of the party, it is gratifying to know that the most optimistic anticipations of success have been more than realized, as shown by Mr. Roosevelt's summary of results communicated to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and published in the 'National Geographic Magazine' for April, 1910 (pp. 364, 369, 370). The expedition landed at Mombasa on April 21, 1909, and reached Khartoum on March 14, 1910, none of the party having experienced serious illness during their long period of tropical field work. Eight months were spent in British East Africa, the collections having been made principally on the Athi and Kapiti plains, in the Sotik, and around Lake Naivasha. Also, to quote from the report: "Messrs. Mearns and Loring made a thorough biological survey of Mount Kenia, while the rest of the party skirted its western base, went to and up the Guaso Nyero, and later visited the Uasin Geisha region and both sides of the Rift Valley. Messrs. Kermit Roosevelt and Tarlton went to the Lailsipia and Lake Harrington, and Dr. Mearns and Mr. Kermit Roosevelt made separate trips to the coast region near Mombasa." On the way down the White Nile over three weeks were spent in the Lado, and collections were also made on the Bahr el Ghazal and Bar el Zeraf. Important aid was courteously extended throughout the journey by the British and Belgian officers of the countries traversed.

During the trip "Mr. Heller has prepared 1,020 specimens of mammals, the majority of large size; Mr. Loring has prepared 3,163, and Dr. Mearns 714 — a total of 4,897 mammals. Of birds, Dr. Mearns has prepared nearly 3,100, Mr. Loring 899, and Mr. Heller about 50 — a total of about 4,000 birds. Of reptiles and batrachians, Messrs. Mearns, Loring, and Heller collected about 2,000. Of fishes, about 500 were collected. Dr. Mearns collected marine fishes near Mombasa, and fresh-water fishes elsewhere in British East Africa, and he and Cuninghame collected fishes in the White Nile." This makes a total of about 11,400 vertebrates, probably greatly exceeding the number ever taken by any expedition in the same length of time in any country. Besides this, Dr. Mearns collected several thousand plants, and, with assistance from other members of the party, considerable anthropological material and many insects, mollusks and other invertebrates.

All of these vast collections have safely reached the U. S. National Museum in Washington, where specialists are already at work upon them. It is understood that Mr. Heller will prepare the report on the mammals, and Dr. Mearns the report on the birds.

A NEW quarterly ornithological magazine, printed in the Russian language, but which may be designated in English as the 'Ornithological Messenger,' has made its appearance at Moscow, Russia, under the editorial direction of G. I. Poliakov (address: Russia, Moscow, Leontiewsky, No. 17, 5. Annual subscription, 2.50 Rbl.). The first two numbers (1910) contain articles by such well known authorities on Russian birds as S. A. Buturlin, P. P. Susehkin, S. N. Alphéraky, N. A. Sarundy, and others, there being descriptions of several new species, a continued paper on the birds of the eastern part of the Azov Sea (by Alphéraky), a revision of the Nightingales of the genus *Philomela* Link (by Buturlin, with a summary in English), and reviews of current ornithological literature.

THE early appearance of Mr. M. A. Carriker's work on the Birds of Costa Rica, left by him in manuscript, on his departure last summer for South America, for publication by the Carnegie Museum of Pittsburgh, is now assured, the matter being in type and ready for printing.

A NEW work, soon to appear in twelve sections, is announced by T. C. and E. C. Jack, of London and Edinburgh, entitled "The British Bird Book, an account of the birds, nests and eggs found in the British Isles," under the editorship of F. B. Kirkman, with "200 plates in color and many in monochrome." The authors include a number of well known authorities on British birds, and among the artists are H. Grönvold, A. W. Seaby, and G. E. Lodge, while photographs will also be freely used in illustration. With the profusion of books on British birds, it would seem that the field is already well covered, but there appears to be still room for another if of the exhaustive character here promised. One of the principal objects in

view is a detailed consideration of the *habits* of the species, and in making clear how little is really known in this respect, to "point the way to further research." The subscription price is 10s. 6d. net per section, with also an edition de luxe at 21s. per section; the London address of the publishers is 16 Henrietta Street, W. C.

ANOTHER work on British birds is also announced by Witherby and Co., the well-known natural history publishers of London. This belongs to the series of county histories, and is entitled 'The Birds of Dumfriesshire,' by Hugh S. Gladstone, "with twenty-four full-page plates from photographs of typical haunts and notable birds," and a contour map of the county in colors, showing altitude. This will be a volume in demy 8vo of about 600 pages. The edition will be limited to 350 numbered copies, and the subscription price is £1 1s. net. The work promises to be fairly exhaustive in point of treatment, and a valuable addition to the list of county avifaunas.

THE New York plumage bill, known as the 'Shea-White Plumage Bill,' passed the legislature of this State at its last session and was signed by Governor Hughes on May 7, 1910. The long-fought contest, waged for four years, by the Audubon Societies and friends of bird protection against the millinery interests of New York City has thus finally resulted in a victory for bird protection, and the precedent thus established we trust will be followed by other States. Some of the special provisions thus enacted are: "No part of the plumage, skin or body of any bird protected by this section [Sec. 98], or of any birds coming from without the State, whether belonging to the same or a different species from that native to the State of New York, provided such birds belong to the same family as those protected by this chapter, shall be sold or had in possession for sale . . . Plumage includes any part of the feathers, head, wings or tail of any bird, and wherever the word occurs in this chapter reference is had equally to plumage of birds coming from without the State, but it shall not be construed to apply to the feathers of birds of paradise, ostriches, domestic fowl or domestic pigeons. This act shall take effect July 1, 1911."

By this act, therefore, aigrettes cannot be legally sold in the State of New York after it becomes operative. The deferred date of its operation is perhaps a reasonable concession to the milliners to enable them to dispose of their present stock without serious loss.

The act thus protects not only egrets and other plume-bearing herons, but gulls, terns, albatrosses, eagles, vultures, and other birds slaughtered for their wings or quills, as well as all song and insectivorous birds.

The passage of the bill is the crowning reward of the persistent and widespread campaign of education conducted by the associated Audubon Societies under the direction of the President of the National Association and his immediate official staff.

It is announced that Mrs. Russell Sage has contributed the sum of \$15,000 to the National Association of Audubon Societies, to be expended during the next three years for bird protection, preferably in the Southern States. The fund is otherwise unrestricted and the first annual installment of \$5,000 is already available.