

aid of numerous explorers of the far north has had to be sought to secure the series of photographs which has been here reproduced. Messrs. MacMillan and Ekblaw, of the American Museum's Crocker Land Expedition, were especially generous in this connection.

We have no doubt that while gathering the material presented in this volume Mr. Bent has also secured the bulk of the information necessary for the treatment of many other groups, and we trust that other 'Life Histories' will follow at frequent intervals.

It is obviously the intention of the U. S. National Museum authorities to issue each set of 'Life Histories' as a separate work, since there is no general title and nothing to indicate that other parts will appear, except an incidental reference by the author to "subsequent parts" in the introduction.

Just as Bendire's work was a decided improvement upon the unfinished work of Brewer (1857), so Bent has made a great advance over Bendire, and his 'Life Histories' will, we feel, be for many years the authoritative work on the subject, forming an admirable parallel series to the technical systematic volumes of Ridgway's 'Birds of North and Middle America.'

Let all ornithologists read carefully the last part of Mr. Bent's introduction, and if they have any information on any of the remaining species of water birds that may be of assistance to him, let them send it on at once. And let the author make all speed with his remaining parts. Two works of the kind have been left unfinished, but on the plan he has adopted and with the cooperation that is offered him, he should easily bring these life histories to a completion and establish another milestone in these progress of American ornithology.—W. S.

### Ridgway's 'The Birds of North and Middle America,' Part VIII.<sup>1</sup>—

This long expected part of Mr. Ridgway's great work has at last appeared, having been long held up by war conditions. It is entirely devoted to a consideration of the Charadriiformes or Plover-like birds, in which group

<sup>1</sup> The Birds | of | North and Middle America: | A Descriptive Catalogue | of the | Higher Groups, Genera, Species, and Subspecies of Birds | Known to Occur in North America, from the | Arctic Lands to the Isthmus of Panama, | the West Indies and Other Islands | of the Caribbean Sea, and the | Galapagos Archipelago. | By | Robert Ridgway, | Curator, Division of Birds. | Part VIII. |

Family Jacanidæ — The Jacanas.

Family Edicnemidæ — The Thick-knees.

Family Hæmatopodidæ — The Oyster-catchers.

Family Arenariidæ — The Turnstones.

Family Aphrizidæ — The Surf Birds.

Family Charadriidæ — The Plovers.

Family Scolopaciidæ — The Snipes.

Family Phalaropodidæ — The Phalaropes.

Family Recurvirostridæ — The Avocets and Stilts.

Family Rynchopidæ — The Skimmers.

Family Sternidæ — The Terns.

Family Laridæ — The Gulls.

Family Stercorariidæ — The Skuas.

Family Alcidæ — The Auks. |

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are included the Gulls, Terns, Skimmers, Skuas, and Auks. The method of treatment follows closely that of the previous volumes and the high standard there set is well maintained. As the birds here considered break up less easily into geographical races, there are fewer new forms proposed than in the preceding volumes, but numerous changes in nomenclature are adopted and a number of new genera are accepted. The numerous new genera and subspecies proposed by Mr. Gregory M. Mathews in his 'Birds of Australia' are considered, but only a few are accepted, which is gratifying to those who, like the reviewer, have felt that Mr. Mathews had gone entirely too far. Mr. Ridgway is not influenced by prejudice in such questions, but gives to each case a fair and unbiased consideration.

The only new forms proposed in the present volume are *Pagolla wilsonia beldingi* (p. 112), Lower California; *P. w. cinnamomina* (p. 113), Sabanilla, Colombia; and *Sterna anætheta nelsoni* (p. 514), Guerrero, Mexico; while one new genus, *Neoglottis* (p. 329), is proposed for the Yellow-legs. Other forms admitted which are additional to those in the A. O. U. 'Check-List' are: *Numenius americanus occidentalis* (Woodhouse), *Sternula antillarum browni* Mearns, *Larus thayeri* Brooks, and *Uria ringvia* Brünn. Owing to the subdivision of the species into several races, *Jacana spinosa* of the 'Check-List' becomes *J. s. gymnostoma* (Wagl.), while *Sterna anætheta* becomes *S. a. recognita* Mathews, *Pisobia aurita* becomes *P. acuminata*, following Mathews' explanation of the error in identification of the plate upon which the name was based, and *Calidris leucophæa* becomes *C. alba* (cf. Auk, 1912 p. 205), while *Pisobia damacensis* becomes *P. subminuta* (Middend.), and *Hæmatopus fraseri* is regarded as a subspecies of *H. palliatus*.

Following the fixation of Linnæan types by the International Commission, *Charadrius* is shifted from the Golden Plovers to the "Ring-necks," the former becoming *Pluvialis*, while *Tringa* is now the generic name of the Solitary Sandpiper, the Knot being known as *Canutus*. On account of preoccupation, *Ochthodromus* becomes *Pagolla*, *Macrorhamphus* becomes *Limnodromus*. *Plautus* is found to date from Gunnerus, 1761, by whom it was used for the Little Auk, so that it replaces *Alle*, while the Great Auk becomes *Pinguinus*, showing that even extinct birds are not safe from the operations of the laws of nomenclature.

The following subgenera of the 'Check-List' are elevated to generic rank: *Endomychura*, *Ciceronia*, *Alcella*, *Hydroprogne*, *Thalasseus*, and *Sternula*, while *Larus* is broken up into *Larus*, *Chroicocephalus*, *Hydrocolæus*, and *Blasipus*; and *Numenius*, into *Numenius*, *Phæopus*, and *Mesoscolopax*, while *Vetola* is used for the Godwits other than *L. limosa*, and *Coprotheres* for the Pomarine Jæger.

According to the main text of the work, *Heteroscelus* is regarded as not invalidated by the earlier *Heteroscelis* and takes the place of *Heteractitis*, but on another page *Chlidonia* is allowed to invalidate *Chlidonias* Rafinesque, which hardly seems to be a consistent application of the rules. It is but fair to mention, however, that Mr. Ridgway states in the addenda

that he rejects *Chlidonias* because published in a newspaper, but at the same time names are accepted from foreign journals which differ little if at all in character from that in which Rafinesque published his genus.

Among forms rejected by Mr. Ridgway we notice *Squatarola squatarola cynosura* Thayer and Bangs, while our two species of Yellowlegs which Dr. Oberholser, following Mathews, regards as belonging to two different genera Mr. Ridgway finds to be strictly congeneric. It is very gratifying to have his fair and unbiased opinion on this and a number of other recently proposed changes which will have to be decided some day by the A. O. U. Committee.

We are pleased to learn from the preface that work is already in progress on Part IX, which will include the Cranes, Gallinaceous Birds, and Birds of Prey, leaving the remaining families for Part X. We sincerely hope that Mr. Ridgway will be able to complete these two volumes in the near future and round out what will for a long time rank as the most important systematic work on American birds.— W. S.

**Witherby's 'A Practical Handbook of British Birds.'** — Two more parts of this excellent work<sup>1</sup> have appeared since our previous notice (Auk, 1919, p. 432), covering the remainder of the Fringillidæ, the Alaudidæ, and most of the Motacillidæ. The standard set in the first part is admirably maintained and a vast amount of accurate information is presented in a concise form. The colored plates, which are most attractively printed, represent the heads of Buntings and Wagtails and a group of Crossbills with nest and young, while the uncolored halftone plates of Redpolls and of young Larks and Pipits are exceedingly well drawn, to show the differences in plumage, while the printing gives a remarkably soft effect. The Redpoll plate may be consulted with profit by American bird students who desire to become better acquainted with the appearance of the several boreal forms which occasionally visit our northern States in winter.

We note that Mr. Witherby rejects Kleinschmidt's name *hostilis* for the British House Sparrow, which is the same race as that which we have in America. The only way in which it was claimed that it differed from the continental race was in its smaller size, but Mr. Witherby finds that the average difference in length of wing is less than 3 mm. and that of 90 individuals only 17 could be certainly distinguished by their size. Dr. Oberholser (Auk, 1917, p. 329) accepted Kleinschmidt's name without presenting any corroborative evidence, but in view of Mr. Witherby's investigations we may safely retain *domesticus* as the name of our "English Sparrow." — W. S.

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<sup>1</sup> A Practical Handbook of British Birds, Edited by H. F. Witherby. Part 2 (pp. 68-128), April 30, and Part 3 (pp. 129-208), June 18, 1919. Price 4s. net per part. In 18 parts. Witherby & Co., 326 High Holborn, W. C. I., London.