

As new names proposed in this part we notice three races of *Lewinornis rufiventris* and two of *Eopsaltria griseogularis* as well as a new genus *Peneceanthe* (p. 273) for *E. leucura*.

In the preface the author further explains his views on the importance of anatomical characters in classification, emphasising the importance of a full knowledge of the subject but stating that "insignificant items have been given great degree and the higher classification based on variable anatomical details of little import." After all, the relative importance of anatomical and superficial characters seems to be a matter of personal opinion. Mr. Mathews objects to our use of the word "sure" in the statement "we find just as much divergence in external characters among species which we feel sure must be closely allied"; but he immediately follows with the statement that in "a group—\* \* \* \* \* whose evolution as to superficialities is *known* [italics ours] their morphology should be contrasted and the degree of anatomical variation determined." But if we claim to *know* how external characters have developed why may we not be *sure* of anatomical relationships? We are however heartily in accord with Mr. Mathews in his reliance upon external characters in conjunction with morphological features in improving our classification and our criticism was due really to a lack of clarity in his former statements regarding the matter.

The first part of Vol. IX covers the old genera *Rhipidura* and *Myiagra*. *Setosura setosa davidi* (p. 31) appears as a new name for *S. s. macgillivrayi*, preoccupied; while *Leucocura leucophrys carteri* (p. 41) is described as new. It is not always clear whom Mr. Mathews is naming his new forms after, as he rarely tells us. An appendix to one of his lists containing information would be valuable historically.—W. S.

**Van Oort's 'Birds of Holland'.**—A double part (7-8) of this important work<sup>1</sup> consists entirely of plates (61-80) of ducks, the text to which will be issued in Part 9. These plates are excellent in execution and are of especial interest to American ornithologists since the Blue-winged Teal, Pintail, Shoveller, European Widgeon, Goldeneye, Old-squaw, Greater Scaup and the Scoters are among the species depicted. All sexual and seasonal plumages are shown especially the eclipse plumage and the downy young which makes this a work of reference of the greatest importance. We do not recall another work in which the plumages are so fully illustrated. W. S.

**Wetmore on Cave Birds of Porto Rico.**—Among the mammal remains recently obtained and reported upon by H. E. Anthony from the

<sup>1</sup> Ornithologia Neerlandica. De Vogels van Nederland door Dr. E. D. Van Oort, directeur van 's Rijks Museum van Natuurlijke Historie te Leiden. Met ongeveer vierhonderd gekleurde platen. Martinus Nijhoff. Aflevering 7-8.

<sup>1</sup> Five New Species of Birds from Cave Deposits in Porto Rico. By Alexander Wetmore. Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington 33, pp. 77-82. December 30, 1920.

caves of Porto Rico are some bird bones which are being studied by Dr. Alexander Wetmore and pending the completion of his report he has published descriptions of five new species—*Polyborus latebrosus* (p. 77); *Gallinago anthonyi* (p. 78); *Oreopeleia larva* (p. 79); *Tyto cavatica* (p. 80); and *Corvus pumilis* (p. 81).—W. S.

**Recent Papers by Oberholser.**—In a paper on new forms of *Cyornis*<sup>1</sup> Dr. H. C. Oberholser describes a new subspecies of *C. rubeculoides*, two of *C. banyumas* and two of *C. elegans*, while his ninth instalment of nomenclatural changes<sup>2</sup> comprise *Dendrocitta celadina* (p. 83) a new name for *D. sinensis* (Lath.); *Motacilla rhadinura* (p. 83) for *M. longicauda* Rupp.; *Eremomela griseoflava perimacha* (p. 84) for *E. flaviventris* (Burchell); *Turdoides polioplocamus* (p. 84) for *Crateropus griseus* (Gm.) and *Arrenga glaucina* (Temm.) for *A. cyanea* all being preoccupied.—W. S.

**Todd on New South American Birds.**—Mr. W. E. C. Todd proposes in this paper<sup>3</sup> sixteen new forms from various parts of South America and Mexico. While some of these are adequately described there are seven in which the diagnosis consists of only two or three lines, including the trinomial name of the form with which the new one is compared. Such descriptions will in all probability prove a hindrance to any comprehensive treatment of the groups to which they belong, until Mr. Todd presents adequate descriptions or until the types are borrowed. One diagnosis reads simply "similar [to an already described form] but general coloration obviously darker and blacker" nothing further except the data of the type.

We have commented upon this sort of practice before and feel, with a large number of other ornithologists, very strongly on the subject. We fear it is useless to hope for that millenium when systematic writers will join hands in an effort to advance the science in which they work in every way possible, instead of retarding its progress by publishing these careless and slovenly diagnoses. Meanwhile why does not the Carnegie Museum take some steps to provide means of publication so that the valuable collections which it is constantly securing might be promptly and adequately described?—W. S.

**Chapman on New Birds from South America.**—The American Museum of Natural History has recently established a new publication under the title of "Novitates" for the immediate publication of new species, etc. The second number is devoted to the presentation of descriptions of eight new South American birds by Dr. Frank M. Chapman. As usual his descriptions are full and satisfactory and in marked contrast

<sup>1</sup> Descriptions of Five New Species of *Cyornis*. By Harry C. Oberholser. Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington. 33, pp. 85-88. December 30, 1920.

<sup>2</sup> Mutanda Ornithologica. IX. *Ibid.* pp. 83-84.

<sup>3</sup> Descriptions of Apparently New South American Birds. By W. E. Clyde Todd. Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington. 33, pp. 71-76. December 30, 1920.