

**Cathartes aura septentrionalis.** TURKEY VULTURE.—Corrington writes: "Allison reports this species as common. Strangely enough I saw not a single Turkey Vulture during my stay in Biloxi and am at a loss to account for this apparent absence of so typical a bird." Turkey Vultures were seen a number of times by the writer during his 1918 visit, three birds being observed on one occasion. However the Black Vulture was by far the commoner species.

**Circus hudsonius.** MARSH HAWK.—Corrington states that he found this bird only on the islands. I observed a Marsh Hawk at Ocean Springs, Miss., February 6, 1918.

**Seiurus noveboracensis.** (subsp.?). WATER-THRUSH.—Not included in Corrington's list. One of these birds was seen in the Biloxi Cemetery, February 9, 1918.—CHRESWELL J. HUNT, *Chicago, Illinois*.

**The Type of the Genus Colymbus Linn.** —There seems to be but one Linnaean genus of birds concerning which ornithologists are not in agreement. This is *Colymbus* which British authorities have used for the Loons while Americans, since the appearance of the A. O. U. 'Check-List' in 1886, have universally applied it to the Grebes.

This is one of the instances where the old method of fixing types by elimination produced different results according to who did the eliminating. With the adoption of the "subsequent designation" method by the International Commission the way seemed open for agreement and since the first designation seemed to be that of the A. O. U. Committee in the 1886 'Check-List' it seemed as if the American custom in the use of the name must prevail, especially when the 'List of British Birds' by Hartert et al adopted the name *Colymbus* for the Grebes.

However the end was not yet. It was discovered that Gray who had made an untenable designation for the genus in his 'List of the Genera of Birds' in 1840, specifying a species not in the 1758 edition of Linnaeus, had corrected his mistake in the 1855 edition of the same work and designated *Colymbus arcticus*, a Loon, and one of the species included by Linnaeus in 1758. This action apparently constituted a valid designation and fixed the name on the Loons so that our British colleagues immediately returned to their original usage.

The American Committee considered this new evidence but decided that since Gray in making his 1855 designation explicitly mentioned "Linnaeus 1735," a prebinomial edition of the 'Systema,' and a work not considered in binomial nomenclature, his designation was therefore not valid for the 1758 edition from which most of his genera date. While the writer concurred in this view at the time, a subsequent review of the whole matter has tended to change his attitude. The question at issue is really what edition of Linnaeus was Gray considering when he made his type designations? There was by no means uniformity of opinion at that time as to which edition should be considered as the beginning of zoological nomenclature, indeed most British ornithologists began with the 1766 edition. It

is perfectly clear when we read the prefaces to the 1841 and 1855 editions of Gray's 'List' that he adopted the Linnaean genera from the edition of the 'Systema' in which they first appeared as genera, namely 1735, 1744, 1756, 1758 and 1766. In the 1840 edition of his 'List' he gives no dates for the genera but in the 1855 edition he does so in almost every case, quoting the Linnaean genera from various dates given above.

We have all accepted Gray's designations in the 1840 edition for Linnaeus at 1758, if the species quoted appeared in that edition of the 'Systema,' but what authority have we for assuming that it was the 1758 edition that he had in mind any more than the 1766, 1735 or any other edition? None whatever so far as the writer can see. However, it would be foolish to reject these designations, which are universally followed, on the ground that they were based on a consideration of the 1735 edition.

Similarly it seems entirely illogical to reject designations made in the 1755 edition of Gray simply because in the interest of accuracy he here furnishes dates which he had omitted in the previous edition. He moreover realizing that in this case he was changing a previous designation, adds by way of explanation, "nec 1766," meaning obviously that if he were considering the makeup of the Linnaean genus at that date he would have taken another type. He does not say "nec 1758" and we may safely infer that this meant that the genus at this date was in the same category as at 1735.

The action of the A. O. U. Committee itself is a precedent for the interpretation of Gray's action by the British ornithologists as we can easily see by consulting the genus *Larus*, in the 1910 edition of the A. O. U. 'Check-List,' where the type is given as "*Larus canus* Linnaeus (Gray, 1855)," although Gray in listing the genus says "Linnaeus 1744," following his custom of citing the edition of Linnaeus in which the genus originated. In this case too he was changing his designation since he cited *Larus glaucus* in his 1840 'List.'

We cannot adopt one method in one case and another in the next and it seems that we would be following the dictum of wisdom and common sense if we followed our own precedent, especially when we shall thereby bring about uniformity of action throughout the ornithological world. The whole question is one of those minor ones not covered by any Code and which has to be decided arbitrarily.—WITMER STONE, *Academy Natural Sciences, Philadelphia.*