

The result is a mass of detailed and important data on the birds of Russia, Siberia and north China, which will prove of great benefit to students of this part of the Palaearctic region.—W. S.

Wetmore on the Food of Phalaropes, Avocets, and Stilts.—This is one of the series of bulletins on the food habits of various water birds being issued by the U. S. Biological Survey.¹ Dr. Wetmore gives very full tables of the food of the groups under consideration and discusses their feeding habits and behaviour, much of this data being from his personal observations in the Salt Lake region of Utah. He finds all the species harmless or beneficial, so far as their economic relations are concerned, and well worthy of the protection now afforded them, while none of them are of value as game and should not be carelessly shot by so called sportsmen as has sometimes been done.

The Northern and Wilson's Phalaropes, he points out, devour large numbers of mosquito larvae and are therefore of special importance as a check against these pests. The pamphlet is a carefully prepared and important contribution to economic ornithology. There are full page illustrations of two species of Phalarope and the Stilt from paintings by E. L. Poole one of the most promising of our younger bird artists.—W. S.

Recent Papers by Hartert.—In the last part of the 'Novitates Zoologicae' are several important papers by Dr. Ernst Hartert. In a report² on a collection of birds from New Ireland made by A. F. Eichorn, seventy-one forms are listed, of which *Gallinocolumba beccarii nodifica* (p. 118), *Micropsitta bruijnii necopinata* (p. 124), *Halcyon tristrami navaehiberniae* (p. 125), are described as new, while incidentally the collection shows the distinctness of forms from neighboring islands of which *Ninox variegata superior* (p. 121) from New Hanover, and *Lalage karu falsa* (p. 131) from Duke of York Island, are here named. Collecting was carried on from sea level to the tops of the highest mountains which reach an altitude of 3000 feet. Two interesting Parrots of New Ireland are figured, *Domicella albidinucha* and *Micropsitta meeki*.

Dr. Hartert also has a description³ of a new Chukar Partridge, *Alectoris graeca kleini* (p. 137).

In continuing his list of types⁴ in the Tring Museum, he covers the "Picarian" families, Woodpeckers, etc., and describes as new *Ramphastos monilis aurantiistrostris* (p. 143) from British Guiana.

He also presents a review⁵ of the genus *Cacomantis* in which four races of

¹ Food of American Phalaropes, Avocets and Stilts. By Alexander Wetmore. Department Bulletin No. 1359 U. S. Department of Agriculture, October, 1925, pp. 1-20.

² A Collection of Birds from New Ireland (Neu Mecklenburg.) By Ernst Hartert. Nov. Zool. XXXII, No. 2, October, 1925, pp. 115-136.

³ A New Form of Chukar Partridge. By Ernst Hartert. *ibid.* p. 137.

⁴ Types of Birds in the Tring Museum. By Ernst Hartert. *ibid.* pp. 138-157.

⁵ Review of the Genus *Cacomantis*. By Ernst Hartert. *ibid.* pp. 164-174.

C. variolosus are described, making fifteen in all; while four of *C. merulinus*, two of *C. castaneiventris*, and six of *C. cineraceus* are recognized.

In conjunction with Dr. Stresemann he has published a review¹ of another allied genus, *Chalcites*, in which *C. malayanus salvadorii* (p. 162) is proposed as new, from Babber Island.—W. S.

Figgins on Subspecies.—Mr. J. D. Figgins has recently published three papers of a rather rambling nature but all of them primarily directed against the excessive description of subspecies. In one² he advances the theory that many alleged subspecies are really hybrids. This is by no means a new claim, but as Mr. Figgins merely infers hybridism in nearly all of the cases he cites, and gives little or no definite data, while he seems unacquainted with the vast literature on Mendelian crosses and similar subjects, his arguments hardly command serious consideration.

Another paper³ shows that freshly collected skins of Towhees placed in strong sunlight, bleach in a short time, while those kept in shade do not, and the claim is made that living birds do likewise and that paler races are really only based on faded individuals, but here again there is a lack of precise data or citation of definite cases, and most describers of subspecies take this matter into consideration, while those cases in which fading has been mistaken for subspecific variation have been largely if not entirely eliminated from our lists. The demand for breeding specimens has not been, as Mr. Figgins infers, to show the greatest difference between races, but to show the true (breeding) distribution of the form, and fresh plumaged autumn individuals of most subspecies are just as easily distinguished as are breeding birds if not more so. The claim that Mr. Beebe's very limited experiments eliminate all question of the influence of "meteorological elements" on living birds is rather unfortunate, as Mr. Figgins seems quite unacquainted with the far reaching and extended work of Prof. Sumner on this problem which has brought quite opposite results. Likewise, the references to Hollister's claim that captivity affects the bony structure of lions, causing differences as great as those claimed as subspecific in wild animals, is unfortunate in the face of more recent investigation which shows the condition of the captive animals to be due to disease.

In his third paper⁴ the A. O. U. Committee seems to be Mr. Figgins' target and while this long suffering body has long since refrained from any sort of defence, a few words as to its attitude on subspecies may not be amiss, as many others are no better informed than Mr. Figgins on the subject.

¹ Ueber die Indoaustralischen Glanzkuckucke (*Chalcites*) von Ernst Hartert und Erwin Stresemann, *ibid.* pp. 158-163.

² Some Observations Relative to Hybrids and Intergradation. By J. D. Figgins. *Proc. of the Colorado Museum of Nat. Hist.* V, No. 1, June, 1925, pp. 1-12.

³ Some Observations Relative to Meteorological Influences. By J. D. Figgins. *ibid.*, V, No. 2, pp. 13-22. July 20, 1925.

⁴ Twice-told Tales. By J. D. Figgins. *ibid.*, No. 3, October 5, 1925, pp. 23-32.