

In connection with studying the Panama collections which number upwards of 3000 skins and which have been presented to the American Museum of Natural History by Mr. Sanford Barnes and Mr. Griscom, 21 new forms have been found which are described by Mr. Griscom in a recent paper.<sup>1</sup> In another paper<sup>2</sup> he describes an ornithological reconnaissance in eastern Panama in 1927 accompanied by Mrs. Griscom, Maunsell S. Crosby and Rex R. Benson. The party visited the Pearl Islands and went up the Sambú River from the Gulf of San Miguel and through the country back of Cape Garachiné. A list of 41 species is presented of which *Saucerottia edwardi margaritarum* (p. 4) is described as new from the Pearl Islands and *S. e. crosbyi* (p. 5), *Pachysylvia minor darienensis* (p. 7), *Compsothlypis pitiayumi nana* (p. 8) and *Atelodacnis leucogenys panamensis* (p. 9) all from Cape Garachiné.—W. S.

**Kalmbach on the Economic Value of the Magpie.** In this exhaustive report<sup>3</sup> Mr. Kalmbach sums up the economic status of the Magpie on the basis of stomach contents as well as upon data obtained from field studies of the bird in life.

Its food analysis discloses many alfalfa weevils, caterpillars, and grasshoppers which make up 36 per cent of the whole, as well as some rodents and much carrion. On the other hand the Magpies destroy some poultry, wild birds and their eggs, but based on stomach contents alone the verdict would be that the bird is one of the most beneficial of the Corvidae with its shortcomings similar to those of the Crow but its insectivorous habits more pronounced.

Unfortunately it is locally a serious menace to live stock attacking those with open sores or unhealed brands, and pecking at them until they die; sheep, pigs, cows and even horses, having been victims of the attacks. Once a ranchman witnesses one of these attacks it is hard to convince him that the Magpie has any good qualities, for, as in the case of Hawks, no one pays any attention to the birds when doing good.

The Magpies also interfere with the operations of poisoning Coyotes and other "predatory mammals" by eating the bait but they pay dearly for their "offence" since in one Coyote campaign in Washington 5000 Magpies were destroyed.

Mr. Kalmbach regards the Magpie's offences as local in character and considers that immediate and summary action by the ranchers will check their predatory habits, which may really be originally indulged in by only a few individuals. "Extermination of the species over large areas is not

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<sup>1</sup> Undescribed or Little-known Birds from Panama. By Ludlow Griscom. Amer. Mus. Novitates, No. 280, September 10, 1927, pp. 1-19.

<sup>2</sup> An Ornithological Reconnaissance in Eastern Panama in 1927. By Ludlow Griscom. Amer. Mus. Novitates, No. 282, September 12, 1927, pp. 1-10.

<sup>3</sup> The Magpie in Relation to Agriculture. By E. R. Kalmbach. Technical Bulletin, U. S. Dept. Agriculture, October, 1927, pp. 1-30. Price 10 cents (U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.).

called for, and before local campaigns are inaugurated careful consideration should be given to their necessity and scope."

As usual it seems to be man's activities that have encouraged and made possible the worst of the Magpie's bad habits and in spite of Mr. Kalmbach's impartial investigation the bird we fear will have a hard time of it and gradually become scarce just as the Hawks are disappearing in the eastern States in spite of all expert testimony.—W. S.

**Lewis on the European Starling in Ontario.** The first part of this report<sup>1</sup> traces the advance of the Starling in Canada and in Ontario, from the first occurrence in 1915 to the time that it became well established.

The economic part, in its essential features, confirms the reports on the bird's status in the United States and many references are made to the reports of Forbush and of Kalmbach and Gabrielson. Mr. Lewis finds that the Starling devours a large number of injurious insects while as yet no serious complaints have been made against it by fruit growers. In its relation to other birds there are several reports of its dispossessing Flickers, Bluebirds, etc., of their nesting places. Evidently as yet the bird is not sufficiently numerous to be a nuisance, just as is the case in many parts of the United States.

In England where for many years it was regarded as a beneficial species or at least neutral in its economic status, O. V. Aplin called attention as long ago as 1889 to its extraordinary increase in certain sections and predicted that it might change its manner of living and attack crops and would then undoubtedly become a serious nuisance. He also called attention to its increasing attacks on other birds. In 1921 Dr. W. E. Collinge shows that this prophecy had come true, stating that a gradual change of opinion regarding the Starling had taken place and that its alarming increase throughout the country "threatens the cereal and fruit crops and the magnitude of the plague is now fully realized." All of these facts Mr. Lewis has set forth at length and calls attention to the quality of the bird for food and the good sport that is afforded in hunting such wary game. Should it threaten to become a nuisance he thinks it should at once be regarded as a game bird with an unlimited season.

We cannot too strongly recommend the same course in the United States and in many centers of population the time would seem to have arrived. In Philadelphia and its suburbs the Starlings devour all of the food supply formerly available for native winter birds so that the latter have in certain sections largely disappeared.

Mr. Lewis's paper is an excellent, unbiased review of the Starling's status and both Canada and the United States should awaken to the danger that confronts us and take action to hold the bird in check *before* it becomes too numerous. If the ammunition dealers wish to increase

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<sup>1</sup> A Distributional and Economic Study of the European Starling in Ontario. By Harrison F. Lewis. University of Toronto Studies Biological Series, No. 30. Published by the Librarian, 1927, pp. 1-57.