

Bird Population in England.

Editor of 'The Auk.'

In 'The Auk' for October, 1932, the reviewer of W. B. Alexander's paper 'The Bird Population of an Oxfordshire Farm' notes that the results of summer and winter counts show about two to three per acre at either season, and observes that they substantially agree with results obtained from similar counts in the eastern United States. He goes on to say that "this result shows that remarks as to the greater abundance of birds in England compared with this country have been prompted by enthusiasm rather than based on facts," and that "we can thank Mr. Alexander for debunking another portion of gush." I wonder if it is quite safe to make so sweeping a generalization from the census of a single 125-acre farm. When I visited England in the summer of 1930, I was prepared by my reading and by conversations with ornithologists who are not given to "gush" to find bird life more abundant there than in New England, and I was not at all disappointed. My experience was not confined to "the birds seen about a greenery embowered residence," but included walks and drives through farming country and woods and over heaths and sheep-pastures in Kent, Hampshire, Westmorland and Cumberland; and I have no hesitation in saying that birds everywhere were far more abundant than I should have found them in any normal July and August in New England. I had the pleasure of spending two days driving over the Lake Country with Mr. W. B. Alexander himself, and I am sure that we saw many more birds than I could have shown him in the same time here. I also remember very well his expressing the opinion that birds were more abundant in England than in any other temperate region in the world!

I may add that in a recent letter Mr. Alexander writes me that the area dealt with in his paper had, actually, very little diversity, consisting, as it did, of five grass fields with hedges around them and one small copse, and that he and his associates are making further censuses on a more diversified area which promise to give quite different results. It may be well to wait until these are published before we make any further comparisons between conditions in England and the United States.

FRANCIS H. ALLEN

West Roxbury, Mass., May 9, 1933.

The Ten-year Index to 'The Auk.'

Editor of 'The Auk.'

For the past two years or more much of my spare time has been devoted to labor upon the fourth ten-year index to 'The Auk,' now completed. It is natural that one so occupied should scrutinize the journal (even the parts on which he is not laboring) from the standpoint of such a cataloger, that he should be critical of features that do not fit in with his labors, and that he might have suggestions to make toward lessening the work of future index makers.

There is one individual item in the ten volumes just indexed that seems to call for comment. That is Lincoln's 'A bibliography of bird banding in America.' Criticism, needless to say, is not directed toward the contribution itself but toward the method of handling. Issued as a supplement to 'The Auk,' it is separately paged and there is no satisfactory way of indicating in the 'Ten-year Index' the position of this bibliography in the series. The title page of the article bears the caption "Supplement to 'The Auk,' vol. XLV, 1928"; it appeared at the end of the October issue. Except for a passing comment in the text (p. 545), nowhere in the volume, in index, contents, or on the wrappers, is there any entry pertaining to it. Once removed, in the process of binding or otherwise there is nothing to indicate that a part is missing. Whatever the reason for inclusion of the bibliography in this form, it seems indefensible from the standpoint of the indexer. One such article in ten years need not in itself cause much trouble, but the precedent is so bad that it should not be allowed to stand without a protest. "Supplements" in similar form have appeared with other journals, it is true, but the custom is none the less objectionable on that account. Recently in my own institution I discovered quite by accident that one such supplement was missing from our file of a certain periodical, supposedly complete. It required separate purchase, the need had been overlooked, and there was nothing in the row of volumes on the shelf to show that there was a gap. In the particular bibliography under discussion there seems to be no reason why it should not have been paged continuously with the journal in which it appeared.

All such matters should be simplified to the utmost, tending toward ease and certainty of ascertaining the exact contents of a given volume, or of a given series. To this end I would suggest the desirability of future Ten-year Indexes to 'The Auk' receiving volume numbers as parts of the series of that journal. Then, holders of files would know without doubt the exact status of their series; as it is, the several Auk Indexes are independent, unnumbered publications. 'The Condor' has met this problem in what seems to me to be a still more unsatisfactory way. The Ten-year Indexes to 'The Condor' form numbers 6, 13, and 20 of the 'Pacific Coast Avifauna' series. To have the indexes of one serial form numbered parts of another serial is a needless complication. Librarians aiming toward the completeness of their files are forced to include useless numbers in their 'Avifauna' series, and to purchase second numbers to accompany 'The Condor.'

Then another, quite different subject. In 'The Condor,' vol. II, 1900, p. 41, there appeared a communication from Robert Ridgway urging that in any published notes the scientific names of birds "should *always* be given, whether accompanied by the vernacular name or not." His reasons were absolutely convincing—at least sufficiently so to have made an impression on the editors of that journal that has lasted to the present day. It was a great surprise to the writer to find in his labors on 'The Auk' index to what an extent this rule had been ignored; there are many important

records in 'The Auk' that can not be cited in formal synonymy simply because there is no name by which to cite them. For example, to take one issue that I happen to have been consulting recently, vol. XLVIII, January, 1931. On page 114 there is an item entitled "White Herons at Lincoln, Mass." I do not doubt that the author knew what the birds were, but can anyone else hope to be informed? There are other "Egret" records in the same issue that are just as hazy. In another place (Vol. XLV, 1928, pp. 471-474), an extremely important paper, giving information that I infer is not elsewhere on record, nowhere includes the specific name of the bird described. I may be excused for stressing this matter in the light of Ridgway's criticism of 'The Condor' for exactly the same thing. It is not only a matter of omitting the scientific names of birds and giving clearly recognizable vernacular names (these can be properly assembled in the index, though never cited elsewhere), but there are more than a few instances, as of the "White Herons" mentioned above, that can not even be "indexed."

As opposed to these reluctant criticisms, or suggestions, rather, it is a great pleasure to comment upon the invaluable "review" department of 'The Auk.' Even in this department I might suggest, however, that if "W. L. M.," in those occasional ornitho-entomological reviews where several articles are treated in one combined summary, would give titles and authors in full, as he does not always do, it would by that much lessen the strain upon a fatigued indexer, suddenly confronting a difficult situation.

H. S. SWARTH.

[We have engaged in sufficient bibliography and indexing to sympathize with Mr. Swarth and we cheerfully admit the justice of his specific criticisms of 'The Auk'—from the bibliographic standpoint. The editorial standpoint, however, must also be given consideration as well as the wishes of the generous patron who contributes the cost of special publications.

Complications arise at the last moment which are hard or impossible to meet and the editor has always regretted the failure to include the bibliography referred to in the contents of the issue. It was impossible to page it continuously and, when it was decided to add it to the October number, it was too late to more definitely connect it with that issue.

The "White Heron" reference should of course have had the technical name added—its omission by the author was not noticed until too late. As to other "Egret" references it should be born in mind that "Egret" was in January, 1931, the recognized English name for the "American Egret" (*Casmerodius alba egretta*).

As to requiring a technical name for every mention of a bird there is room for difference of opinion and we fear the bibliographer must take things as he find them, just as he must take the aggravatingly inappropriate titles that he continually encounters. 'Bird-Lore,' for example, rarely uses a technical name and yet to ignore the wealth of information contained in its pages would be ridiculous. Moreover, there is rarely ambiguity in the

use of English names—no more indeed than in the use of the ever changing technical names.

As to the issue of the indexes as regular numbers of 'The Auk' the treasurer would probably have something to say! This practice would entitle every subscriber and member to receive them without extra charge and vastly increase the cost to the Union with practically no return. It is the sale of these publications that makes them at all possible.

Mr. Swarth is bibliographically right on every count but in these days of financial and editorial stress there are other angles to be considered.—Ed.]

Migrating Dovekies and the Polar Ice Cap.

Editor of 'The Auk.'

In the account of the "Dovekie Influx of 1932" (Auk, July, 1933) John Treadwell Nichols suggests (p. 348) that the hordes may have come from Old World breeding grounds; while in the April issue (p. 216) Ira N. Gabrielson mentions "a great southward movement of unusual northern sea-fowl off the Oregon coast." Admiral Byrd in his 'Little America' and Gould in his 'Cold' have pointed out that the polar ice cap influences the weather conditions for the rest of the world.

These statements taken together are very interesting to those of us who sailed up to the polar ice pack north of Spitzbergen in August, 1932, and found this impenetrable barrier at 80° 30' N. Lat., sixty miles farther south than it had been when the motor yacht "Stella Polaris" had made the trip, the year before. The southward movement of the ice pack augured an unusually severe winter cold to follow and it would seem to have had an immediate effect on the birds.

We found Dovekies and other species nesting by tens of thousands on "Bird Rock" some sixty miles south of Bear Island a little south of Spitzbergen.

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