

RECENT LITERATURE.

Peters's 'Check-List of Birds of the World.'—The second volume¹ of this notable work is before us, uniform in every respect with its predecessor and carrying us through the Alcidae in the sequence of Wetmore's classification. In other words our author has completed the "water birds" and also the "Struthious birds," the diurnal "birds of prey," and the "gallinaceous birds."

In reviewing volume I we expressed our hearty approval of the author's labors and of the plan and make up of the work and we can only endorse what we then said in praising the present volume. As most of our readers will be interested in a comparison of Mr. Peters's treatment of the North American species included in the present volume with that of the A. O. U. 'Check-List' we have carefully examined the two works side by side. As regards subspecies we find that only five of those recognized in the A. O. U. list have been rejected,—*Dendragapus obscurus flemmingi* being regarded as inseparable from *D. o. richardsoni*; *Lagopus lagopus ungaricus* from *L. l. lagopus*; and *Callipepla californica plumbea* from *C. c. californica*; while *Lagopus l. albus*, and *Hydroprogne caspia imperator* are considered inseparable from the old world forms *L. l. lagopus* and *H. c. caspia* which would take their places in the list if Mr. Peters's views are accepted.

Seven additional subspecies, all but one published after the A. O. U. list was prepared are recognized viz: *Dendragapus obscurus pallidus* Swarth, from Eastern Oregon; *Lagopus l. leucopterus* Taverner, Arctic islands of North America; *Lagopus mutus captus* Peters, eastern Greenland (n. n. for *L. m. groenlandicus* Brehm); *Pedioecetes phasianellus jamesi* Lincoln, eastern Colorado; *Rallus limicola zetarius* Peters, Pacific coast (n. n. for *R. l. pacificus* Dickey); *Uria aalge inornata* Salomonsen, coasts of Bering Sea; and *Cepphus grylle arcticus* Brehm, revived by Austin for birds of southern Greenland, etc.

Nine species of the A. O. U. list are reduced to subspecies of other species in Peters's work standing as follows: *Dendragapus obscurus fuliginosus*. *Lagopus mutus rupestris*, *Colinus virginianus ridgwayi*, *Haematopus ostralegus palliatus*, *H. o. bachmani*, *Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*, *Himantopus himantopus mexicanus*, *Catharacta skua chilensis* and *Sterna albifrons antillarum*—seven of them being cases of American species made subspecies of European forms. Mr. Peters is very conservative as regards genera and nine of those recognized by the A. O. U. Committee are rejected as are also several subgenera. The genera in question are *Ionornis* united with *Porphyrula*; *Oxyechus* and *Pagolla* included in *Charadrius*; *Phaeopus* in *Numenius*; *Totanus* in *Tringa*; *Pelidna*, *Pisobia* and *Arquatella* in *Erolia*; and *Endomychura* in *Brachyrhamphus*.

¹ Check-List | of Birds of the World | Volume II | By | James Lee Peters | Curator of Birds, Museum of Comparative Zoölogy | at Harvard College, Cambridge | Harvard University Press | 1934. | Pp. i-xvii+1-401. Price \$4.00.

Only four changes in names are adopted: *Laterallus* for *Creciscus*, the necessity for which has already been pointed out by Mr. Peters; *Pagophila alba* for the Ivory Gull reverts to *P. eburnea* on the grounds that *Gunnerus Larus albus* is unidentifiable; *Hydroprogne caspia* becomes *H. tschegrava* because our author regards the latter name of Lepechin as acceptable; the generic name *Alle* Link for the Dovekie becomes *Plautus* Gunnerus, which Mr. Peters regards as recognizable, and as a consequence *Plautus* Brünnich for the Great Auk must change to *Pinguinus* Bonaterre. With the exception of the first change, which is not open to question, all of these cases have been before the A. O. U. Committee several times and one, at least has been accepted and later rejected. Such changes, back and forth, are entirely due to personal opinion and the personnel of the Committee, and, it would seem, must go on forever. It is in such cases as these that a Committee vote is more likely to produce stability than an individual opinion.

The questions of the limits of genera and of specific vs. subspecific rank are also entirely matters of personal opinion and views on many of them have shifted back and forth in the several editions of the 'Check-List' and other standard works, and will no doubt continue to shift. However it is a matter for congratulation to know that in the 262 North American species and subspecies of Mr. Peters's list only 27 changes have been found desirable by him as representing his personal opinion as opposed to that of the Committee and that only one is absolutely necessary by the Code of Nomenclature.

Besides the two mentioned above there is one other new name proposed in the volume—*Rallus torquatus limarius* for *Hypotaenidia saturata* Salvadori.

It must be the greatest satisfaction to all ornithologists, especially those in charge of large museum collections to have this admirable, up to date, résumé of the birds of the world which will prove absolutely indispensable in systematic work and our only regret is that the subsequent volumes cannot be speeded up. Our hearty congratulations and encouragement go out to Mr. Peters.—W. S.

Roberts's 'Bird Portraits in Color.'—Following the example of the publishers of the 'Birds of New York' and of the 'Birds of Massachusetts' the University of Minnesota has issued the plates of Dr. Roberts's 'Birds of Minnesota' in a separate volume or atlas.¹ We learn from the introduction that this is done in response to a growing demand for a handy set of illustrations to meet the use of the school room and the casual bird-lover; furthermore the edition of the large work is exhausted with no immediate prospect of a second printing.

Dr. Roberts has improved upon the atlases above mentioned by preparing a brief text to accompany the plates which is printed on the pages

¹ Bird Portraits in Color two hundred ninety-five North American species, text by Thomas S. Roberts, M. D. Minneapolis, 1934. Price, cloth, \$3.50; limp cloth, \$2.50; in portfolio without text, \$1.50. Univ. Minn. Press, Minneapolis.