

RECENT LITERATURE.

Hellmayr's 'Birds of the Americas.'—The author and the Field Museum are to be congratulated upon the progress that has been made with this invaluable work;¹ two thick volumes within a year's time is a record of which anyone should be proud. Apparently only the Finches and Tanagers remain to complete the study of the Passeres and as Mr. Cory covered the "Picarian" families, the work will then be completed with the exception of the Raptores, Columbæ and the "Water Birds" which were passed over by Mr. Cory until they should have been covered in Ridgway's 'Birds of North and Middle America,' which latter work, by the way, is not yet completed although seven years have passed since Mr. Ridgway's death.

Dr. Hellmayr has adhered rigidly to the plan followed in the preceding parts of this great work and we find the same abundance of information, the same accurate synonymy and the same helpful footnotes—for all of which systematic ornithologists of the world should be grateful. Only those who have undertaken work of a similar nature can appreciate the enormous labor that is involved.

As heretofore we are compelled from lack of space to limit our comments mainly to the treatment of North American species and the way in which it differs from that of the A. O. U. 'Check-List.'

In the Larks, Dr. Hellmayr prefers the generic name *Chionophilos* to *Otocoris* and recognizes the intermediate form *enthymia* Oberholser, both of which are opposed to the action of the A. O. U. Committee.

In the Swallows, the Cuban Martin (*Progne cryptoleuca*) is made a subspecies of *P. subis*; the specific name of the Cliff Swallow is changed to *pyrrhonota* (Vieill), based upon Azara, who according to Dr. Hellmayr's interpretation described a wintering North American individual; likewise he finds Lembeye's name *coronata* applicable to the Cuban Cliff Swallow named by Barbour and Brooks, *Petrochelidon-fulva cavicola*; our Barn Swallow becomes a subspecies of *Hirundo rustica* of Europe and the genera *Chelidonaria* and *Delicon* are united.

In his treatment of the Vireos Dr. Hellmayr rejects *olivaceus* for the Red-eyed Vireo because Linnaeus cited references to several species and it is impossible to state which he had principally in mind, but if this principle were to be followed rigidly we should have to reject a good many names of Linnaeus, Gmelin and others! We see no reason to reject such names as the first revisor principle enables us to follow the custom of years and avoid complicating our nomenclature. *Vireo chivi* is rejected as unrecognizable and *V. calidris* and its races, as also *V. flavoviridis*, become subspecies of *V. virescens* (= *olivaceus*).

Coming to the Laniidae, we find our Northern Shrike, like our Barn Swallow, placed as a subspecies of the European species (i. e. *Lanius excubitor borealis*) and under *L. ludovicianus* we find the statement that the name "might refer with equal degree of probability to either *ludovicianus*, *migrans* or *excubitorides*" but "it seems highly desirable to conserve the current use of the name." While we heartily endorse this decision we cannot but realize that it is directly contrary to the author's procedure in the case of *Vireo olivaceus* above! *L. l. grinnelli* and *L. l. mearnsi* rejected by the A. O. U. Committee are accepted.

¹ Catalogue of Birds of the Americas. By Charles E. Hellmayr, Associate Curator of Birds, Field Museum of Natural History. Publication 347. Zoological Series, Vol. XIII. September 16, 1935. Pp. 1-541. Part VIII; Alaudidae — Hirundinidae — Motacillidae — Bombycillidae — Ptilogonatidae — Dulidae — Vireonidae — Vireolanidae — Cyclarhidae — Laniidae — Sturnidae — Coerebidae — Compothlypidae.

The genera *Aethiopsar* and *Acriditheres* in the Starlings are united and in the Honeycreepers, not only *Coereba bahamensis* but all of the thirty-fives species and subspecies of this genus, are made subspecies of *C. flaveola*!

There are a number of changes in the Wood Warblers from the arrangement of the 'Check-List': *Vermivora celata orestera*, *Peucedramus olivaceus arizonae*, *Dendroica aestiva amnicola*, *Seiurus aurocapillus furvior* and *Geothlypis trichas insperata* are recognized (the second and last not having been published in time for consideration by the Committee); *Compothlypis graysoni* becomes a subspecies of *C. pitiaiyumi* and all of the Mangrove Warblers are united with the Golden Warblers under the specific name *petechia* while in a footnote the author predicts the necessity of further uniting them all with the Yellow Warblers because "their derivation from a common ancestral stock seems hardly in doubt"; the Long-tailed Chat becomes *Icteria virens auricollis* Bp. this name having been shown by van Rossem to have priority. While Dr. Hellmayr retains *Euthlypis*, he states in a footnote that it is a "very poor genus which had better be united to *Basileuterus*" yet curiously enough he separates them by the very distinct *Ergaticus*.

As additional instances of the treatment of quite distinct species as subspecies in one specific group we might mention *Vireo crassirostris* placed under *V. griseus* and the brown bellied *Diglossa brunneiventris* under the gray bellied *D. carbonaria* although the two latter occur within a few miles of one another in Bolivia.

While with the exception of a few demonstrated cases of priority, the changes above listed, and many more in the case of tropical American groups, are purely matters of personal opinion we cannot but regret that Dr. Hellmayr has adopted such an extreme stand in the increase of subspecies and the reduction of species. We had thought that the term "formenkreis" indicated a convenient grouping of both species and subspecies with common ancestry, but his interpretation would seem to make it synonymous with "species." His nomenclature, therefore, indicates primarily or exclusively evolutionary relationship. We have, however, always claimed that a name had another function that of furnishing a handle by which we may let others know what we are talking about, and just as we extend its evolutionary indication we curtail its usefulness in this latter field. Moreover, in the case of the Yellow Warblers and their allies when we unite them all under one specific name we indicate a common ancestry, it is true, but we entirely lose sight of the fact that there are three well distinguishable groups. Is not the one fact just as important as the other?

There are two additional points in Dr. Hellmayr's treatment on which we think that he is in error in his conclusions. In changing the name of the Blackpoll Warbler from *striata* Forster to *breviunguis* Spix he claims that *Muscicapa striata* Forster (1772) is barred by *Motacilla striata* Pallas (1764). This is contrary to the Canon XXX of the Revised Code of the American Ornithologists' Union. These names were originally proposed in different genera and are in different genera today; one therefore does not preclude the use of the other unless they are now regarded as congeneric.

In the case of the Townsend specimens from the "Columbia River" we do not think that the Washington and Cambridge specimens can be regarded as "co-types." Most of the new species were described in the 'Journal of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia' and we maintain that the specimens retained there are the types. The "duplicates" were sold to Audubon and others and they are the ones now in other museums.

We wish Dr. Hellmayr all speed with his remaining volumes. They will be our standard reference work in all studies of the birds of the Americas for many years to

come and the convenience of the volumes already at our disposal makes us all the more anxious for the others that are to come!—W. S.

Bond's 'Birds of the West Indies.'—While several excellent works on the birds of individual islands in the West Indies group have appeared during the past few years, there has been no book on the avifauna as a whole since Charles B. Cory's 'Birds of the West Indies' published in 1889, and this consisted entirely of descriptions, synonymy and a brief statement of range.

The work¹ before us is quite different in plan being designed, as the author tells us, "to combine the technical with the popular" and we think that he has most successfully realized his idea. There are good original descriptions of all of the species and detailed statements of their range, while line cuts and one colored plate from originals by Earl L. Poole serve as excellent illustrations. For interesting sketches of the habits and details of nesting, song, etc., the author has drawn largely upon his personal experiences during ten trips to the islands.

He has endeavored, like a number of other authors, to use the "species" as his systematic unit referring to the subspecies only in the paragraphs on distribution and nesting, although the particular race upon which his description is based is always given and the ways in which other races vary from it. The species which are only winter or casual migrants from the United States or elsewhere, are treated together at the end of each family, after the endemic species, and without the generic headings provided for the latter. The accounts of habits and nesting are presented under the generic heading as most of the West Indian endemic genera are monotypic and it was thought that it would require much repetition in other cases to discuss these matters under each species separately. Synonymy and references to places of publication are omitted as they are apart from the main object of the book and even the authorities for the names are omitted in the main text but are to be found in a complete list of the species and races given at the end of the volume. An additional valuable feature of the work is a list under each species of its local names in English, French or Spanish as the case may be.

In the introduction the author discusses the faunal relationship of the West Indies and points out the preponderance of North American types in its bird life. We cannot place too much weight upon this fact, however, as the relationship of the mammals, especially of the fossil forms, is Neotropical and the fauna of the group was doubtless acquired at different times and from different sources as geological conditions and land connections changed. There are also helpful suggestions to those who visit the islands as to how to obtain an idea of their avifauna which will be very welcome to tourists. Mr. Bond is peculiarly well fitted for the task which he has performed so satisfactorily, as he has personally visited no less than 50 of the islands and has discovered several hitherto unknown races as well as rediscovered two species that were supposed to have been exterminated.

The 'Birds of the West Indies' will prove a handy reference book as well as a field handbook both for visitors to the islands and natives who desire to know something of the bird life about them. We congratulate Mr. Bond upon a task well done.—W. S.

Priest's 'Birds of Southern Rhodesia.'—The third volume² of this excellent work has recently appeared covering the Broadbills, Pittas, Larks, Pipits, Babblers,

¹ The Birds of the West Indies. By James Bond. Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. 1935. Pp. i-xxv + 1-455. Price \$4.50. [Reviewed from final proofs.]

² The Birds of Southern Rhodesia. By Captain Cecil D. Priest, etc. etc. Vol. 3. William Clowes and Sons Ltd., London and Beccles, 1935. Pp. i-ix + 1-355. Price 30 shillings. To be had from the publishers, 94, Jermyn St., London, S. W. 1.