

CORRESPONDENCE

FLYING WITH THE WIND: A CORRECTION

Editor of 'The Auk':

Near the end of my paper on the 'Effect of Wind on Flight Speeds' in the July (1939) 'Auk' I made the statement: "The dislike that birds seem to have for flying with the wind applies, I think—after the first inertia is overcome—only to strong winds, which are accompanied by frequent annoying puffs that ruffle the feathers when they strike them from the rear." In making this statement I followed the opinions of others without thinking the matter through. Dr. Harrison F. Lewis has called my attention to the desirability of a reconsideration, and has put the case so clearly that, with his permission, I quote from his letter. He says: "The puffs you have in mind must, I suppose, be accelerations of air velocity so great and so sudden that, for the moment, the air passes the bird from rear to front, more than cancelling temporarily, the *air speed* in the opposite direction that the bird, by reason of its own efforts, was enjoying a moment before. That is, the sudden increase in velocity of the air surrounding the bird must be greater than the bird's speed through still air. But the bird requires air speed in the normal direction, that is, with the air flowing past it from head to tail, in order to maintain its elevation. If this movement through the air in the normal relation is suddenly lost because an overtaking mass of air strikes in the rear a bird flying with the wind, must not the bird fall downward until the normal relation is restored? I cannot recall seeing this happen and wonder if there are records of careful observations of its occurrence."

Dr. Lewis's question is a very pertinent one, and it seems clear that only extraordinarily violent puffs would really ruffle a bird's feathers from the rear, puffs that could occur only in a wind so turbulent that no bird would attempt to fly in it. As an alternative explanation Dr. Lewis cites Lorenz's suggestion previously cited by him in the 'Auk' for January, 1939, that (in Lewis's words) "birds have a psychological dislike for flying with the wind, at least at low elevations, because then, like a motorboat running down a stream with a swift and turbulent current, their course is difficult to control, they cannot stop at will nor even advance slowly, and they must turn around and face against the current before they can make a safe landing. I am not sure that forethought for the landing, either conscious or instinctive, plays a part in this 'psychological dislike,' but the difficulty of controlling the flight after the turn down wind and while the bird is still near the ground might well account for it."

It will be seen that this incidental error, which I acknowledge with some mortification, has no great bearing on the particular subject of my paper of last July, but the correction is needed nevertheless.

FRANCIS H. ALLEN

West Roxbury, Massachusetts

BENT'S 'LIFE HISTORIES'

Editor of 'The Auk':

For the information of your readers, the author of the series of Bulletins on the 'Life Histories of North American Birds' wishes to report progress in the production of these volumes and ask for further co-operation. The thirteenth volume, containing the remaining non-passerine birds, parrots to hummingbirds in-

clusive, in the order of the old 'Check-list,' is now in type and should be published in the near future. The fourteenth volume, containing the flycatchers, horned larks and swallows, in the order of the new 'Check-list,' is nearly all written, and should go to the publishers before summer. Work is now starting on the fifteenth volume, which is planned to contain the Corvidae and the Paridae. The author would be glad to receive, at any time now, notes, data and photographs relating to birds in these two families. He wishes to thank past contributors for their valued help, and hopes to receive similar co-operation from old as well as new contributors.

A. C. BENT

Taunton, Massachusetts

FIFTY-EIGHTH STATED MEETING OF THE A. O. U.

THE Local Committee on Arrangements for the fifty-eighth stated meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union has made the following tentative schedule for the Boston-Cambridge meeting, September 9-13, 1940. Further details will be given in the Committee's circular of information which will be mailed out by the Secretary of the Union late in the summer. Headquarters will be at the Hotel Statler, Boston. For those who prefer to stay at Cambridge, a limited number of rooms will be available at the Hotel Commander.

The sessions on September 9, will as usual be devoted to the business affairs of the Union; they will be held at the Hotel Statler. The first public sessions will open on September 10 at the New England Museum of Natural History, 234 Berkeley St., Boston. On Wednesday, September 11, and Thursday, September 12, the public sessions will continue at the Institute of Geographical Exploration, Harvard University, Cambridge.

It is planned to hold a reception and buffet supper on Tuesday, at the New England Museum of Natural History. The annual dinner will take place Wednesday evening at the Hotel Statler.

On Friday, September 13, an all-day field trip will be conducted to points of ornithological interest along the coast north and northeast of Boston. Provided that a sufficient number desire, there will be a two-day overnight field trip, September 13-14, to Chatham and Monomoy, Cape Cod. The Committee desires to call the attention of visiting ornithologists to the fact that the second week in September is the height of the fall migration, not only for land birds but of the shorebirds and such off-shore species as jaegers, shearwaters and petrels.

An exhibit to include both paintings and photographs of birds will be held in conjunction with the meeting, at the New England Museum of Natural History. Prospective exhibitors should communicate with Mr. D. L. Garrison, 234 Berkeley St., Boston.

JAMES L. PETERS, *Chairman*

CHARLES F. BATCHELDER

RICHARD J. EATON

DAVID L. GARRISON

LUDLOW GRISCOM

Local Committee on Arrangements