

NOTES AND NEWS

CHARLES A. URNER'S 'BIRDS OF ELIZABETH, NEW JERSEY, AND VICINITY'

THE late Charles A. Urner of Elizabeth, New Jersey, was known to his many friends and acquaintances as one of the most indefatigable of field ornithologists. Although ornithology was but his avocation, he found time to go afield at frequent intervals throughout the years and assembled a great deal of information on the birds of his particular region. Some idea of the extent of this information may be found in numerous articles published by Mr. Urner but there is additional evidence in an unpublished volume now at hand. This volume, entitled as above, was left to the American Museum of Natural History at Mr. Urner's death in 1938, with the proviso that some account of it be published in the pages of 'The Auk.' In fulfillment of this wish, the following account of the book may here be offered.

The volume is a medium quarto (9 by 12 inches) loose-leaf notebook with printed title-page and explanatory 'foreword,' a map of a portion of Union County, New Jersey, showing the routes usually followed by Mr. Urner, and an alphabetical index of species under their vernacular names. The rest of the volume up to an 'Appendix,' which will be discussed later, is devoted to the 'Systematic List.'

Each species is given a full leaf ruled horizontally and vertically into rectangles, one for each month of the year and with a separate horizontal row for each year. A vertical line has been drawn for every observed occurrence of the species, indicating by the height of the mark the number of individuals seen and by the position in the rectangle the date of observation. A red line then encloses the successive marks, showing by the changes in outline the seasonal variation in abundance and by comparison of curves the annual fluctuations. Since the observations here summarized were always made in the same general region on trips of approximately equal length (four hours), the curves are comparable and since there are nearly weekly observations throughout the years from 1916 to 1926, the data are reasonably complete. Sometimes, as in the case of the Song Sparrow, there are two curves, one for each of two different kinds of terrain. A space for remarks at the foot of each page is often filled with instructive notes bearing on the subject matter of the adjacent curves,—identifications of rare species, possible reasons for changes in abundance, unusual circumstances, and similar topics. The series breaks with the Black-capped Chickadee in 1926, showing where the compilation was interrupted by the author's death.

As an 'Appendix,' various generalized summaries are presented: curves showing the number of birds seen on each trip in the uplands near Elizabeth and in the salt marshes of the same region, for 1921 and 1922; a large, folded chart showing the monthly fluctuation of abundance of the various families of birds in the upland populations during 1920, reduced to number of birds per field hour; tables of the basic figures of this chart broken down in various ways and with similar figures for the upland birds in 1921 and for the salt meadows and bays for 1921 and 1922; charts of the apparent monthly variations in the total bird population of the uplands and of the salt marshes and bays, both for various years. Finally, there are sketch maps of a limited area about Elizabeth, New Jersey, divided into three sections of about 79, 84, and 73 acres, respectively, each with its weed patches, meadows, grain fields, swamps, plowed fields, and such

characteristics duly plotted and marked as they varied or remained unchanged each year from 1920 to 1927. For each year there is an accompanying table showing the number of pairs of each species of bird found nesting in each section during that year and summaries of the totals of pairs and species, native and introduced.

Mr. Urner's methodical mind is evident on every page of this uncompleted volume. The data are clearly presented and demonstrate in the best manner the value of simple, frequent, and consistent bird lists, systematically kept and properly analyzed. At a time when such lists are frequently severely criticized for their apparent lack of utility, this manuscript volume stands as a guide to the manner in which these lists may be intelligently kept and studied. The book will be preserved in the library of the American Museum of Natural History where it is hoped it will prove of service to many students of birds with a wide variety of interests.—JOHN T. ZIMMER.

IN MEMORY OF WIRT ROBINSON

MANY of the friends and admirers of Colonel Wirt Robinson will be glad to know that a beautiful and suitable memorial has been built for him at West Point. I had the pleasure of seeing this memorial on a recent trip to the United States Military Academy. The memorial, which is located not far from the Chapel, takes the form of a bird pool in the corner of the terraced gardens. Water runs over a moss-covered rock into a shallow pool. At the right stands a small bronze group of ducks, male, female, and young. In front is a low, rough stone with a small bronze plaque, in the center of which is a simple inscription:

THE WIRT ROBINSON MEMORIAL

A gift to the Military Academy
From the friends of

Colonel Wirt Robinson, Professor, U. S. M. A.

In affectionate remembrance of his

Eminent attainments in the natural sciences

And of his

Great love of nature and of wild life

1940

Around the edges of the plaque are reliefs of wild animals—birds, mammals, fish, and a butterfly.

Colonel Robinson was a distinguished Virginian. For twenty-two years, from 1906 to 1928, he taught chemistry at West Point. In his special field, the chemistry of explosives, he attained high distinction. All his holiday periods were used in the study of natural history, particularly of birds. He was an Associate of the American Ornithologists' Union from 1897, and a Member from 1901. Quite as remarkable as his ability in his profession and in his life-long avocation of ornithology was his genius for friendship, to which this memorial is a spontaneous tribute. Two of his old students in Washington had told me about the memorial; and there was evident affection in the way in which they spoke of him. The same admiration and affection were shown by one of the workmen in the Academy grounds. When I asked him if he could show me the way to this

memorial, he answered: "That I can. I knowed him well. He was a good man. I know he would've liked that duck." He went on to speak proudly of his association with Colonel Robinson, and of the Colonel's kindness to him.
—J. J. MURRAY.

ON September 28, 1940, the new Minnesota Museum of Natural History of the University of Minnesota, at Minneapolis, was formally dedicated. The building was made possible by the gift of Mr. James Ford Bell, with supplementary funds from the Public Works Administration. Dr. Thomas S. Roberts, the Director, and a Fellow of the A. O. U., to whose untiring labors the success of the Museum is largely due, was given the honorary degree of Doctor of Science by the University last June.—Ed.

A BRONZE plaque in memory of Dr. Joseph Kalbfus (1852–1919) was unveiled in the State capitol of Pennsylvania, on July 10, 1940. It is the work of the famous Pittsburgh sculptor, Frank Vittor, and was given by the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs. Dr. Kalbfus was a pioneer in the movement for wildlife conservation, and was for the last twenty-one years of his life Secretary and Chief Game Protector of the Game Commission of Pennsylvania. We are indebted to Mr. Seth Gordon, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Game Commission for a notice of the dedicatory exercises and a photograph of the plaque.—Ed.

ERNEST G. HOLT, Chief of the Biology Division of the Soil Conservation Service, has been granted leave of absence from the U. S. Department of Agriculture for a period of four or five months in order that he might accept an invitation from the International Health Division of the Rockefeller Foundation to collaborate in studies designed to clear up some of the biological problems surrounding sporadic outbreaks of jungle yellow fever. One of these is the possibility that birds act as a reservoir of the disease. Mr. and Mrs. Holt proceeded to Brazil by airplane July 11 to take up their new duties in country already familiar through several expeditions that have taken them into practically every part of that country.—W. L. McATEE.