

RECENT LITERATURE

A revision of the ducks.¹—In spite of the fact that the family *Anatidae* is one of the most popular and best-known of the avian world, it is remarkable how much still remains to be known of its habits, morphology and relationships. This important paper serves to emphasize this fact and to indicate how large a field of study remains to be covered. The two authors are well known for their critical taxonomic knowledge and, in the case of the senior author, for his intimate acquaintance with the behavior of these birds under wild and captive conditions. This combination gives an ideal approach towards revision of the family from the point of view of their relationships, a goal towards which taxonomy is striving.

It is interesting to compare the classification in this paper with that of Peters's 'Check List,' published 14 years ago. Peters recognizes 62 genera in the *Anatidae* of which 44, or 70 per cent, contain only one species. Delacour and Mayr recognize 40 genera of which 22, or only 55 per cent, are monotypic. The reduction in the number of genera recognized amounts to 36 per cent. This is a considerable saving in numbers of names to be remembered. The reduction of species is by no means so sweeping, however. This is partly due to the inherent distinctness of most species of ducks, partly to the overlapping widespread ranges of many forms. Peters recognizes 167 species, the present authors 144, a reduction of only 14 per cent. I am sorry that this paper does not list all the currently recognized subspecies as this would have added considerably to its completeness.

The arrangement of subfamily groups and genera seems ideal to this writer. Where monotypic genera are used, as in the case of *Coscoroba*, an attempt is made to indicate that this represents a transitional stage of relationship between two groups or tribes, in this case the *Anserini* and the *Dendrocygnini*. Only nine monotypic forms are retained because of their anomalous characters. Some species currently assigned to certain groups are open to discussion, a fact well recognized by the authors. I should be inclined to put the steamer ducks in with the *Cairinini* rather than with the *Tadornini*. Another species, the African black duck (*Anas sparsa*), by disposition, by its wing knob, and by its plumage pattern about the neck, seems to me to resemble the *Tadornini*. Possibly it is a link between the *Anatinini* and the sheldrakes. There are always points for discussion in a paper such as this which make it stimulating to further observation and study.

In the list of genera and species (pp. 37-42) a bracket sign is used to indicate superspecies. The use of superspecies here and in other family or regional lists presents some difficulties. By definition superspecies must include only species which replace each other geographically. And yet many forms of ducks are apparently most closely related to forms with which they share overlapping territory. Thus if superspecies are used to express degrees of relationship, the proper picture is not always clearly presented, or may even be somewhat distorted. Thus, for example, in the *Dendrocygnini*, *Dendrocygna bicolor* and *D. arcuata* are indicated as comprising a superspecies, and yet *D. javanica*, which apparently overlaps the range of both, is actually the perfect intermediate species between the two. Again, on p. 39, in the arrangement of the *Anas castanea* group, *gibberifrons* and *bernieri* are put together as a superspecies while *castanea* is bracketed with *aucklandica*. Actually, as far as relationship is concerned, *castanea* and *gibberifrons* would be conspecific

¹ DELACOUR, JEAN, AND MAYR, ERNST. 'The family Anatidae.' The Wilson Bulletin, 57, (no. 1): 3-55, 1 pl., 24 figs., March, 1945.

were it not for the fact that (probably in rather recent historic time) their breeding ranges apparently overlap. Of the four species listed, these two are the closest in relationship and yet they cannot be so indicated except in the unsatisfactory and arbitrary form of simple linear arrangement, particularly unsatisfactory in the case of a large genus like *Anas* which contains 36 species.

One of the particularly noteworthy contributions of this paper is the close correlation made between morphological and behavioristic characters in the detailed classification of the family. It is to be hoped that, wherever possible, taxonomists will take behavior patterns into account in such studies. Especially valuable are the comments on display flights, a little understood and somewhat misinterpreted phenomenon. In the section on food habits (p. 50) I would question the statement that regular diving for food does not occur in the tribe *Anatini*. I have observed Black Ducks, *Anas fulvigula*, dive regularly and persistently for food in deep water.

The illustrations consist of many valuable text-figures, particularly of some of the less-known downy plumages. A well-colored but definitely emaciated Formosa Teal is the subject of the frontispiece. The chart, Table 1., of sub-familial characters is particularly valuable. It is to be hoped that this paper will serve to encourage interest in working out some of the many problems still to be resolved in this fascinating family.—S. D. RIPLEY.

Georgia birds.¹—This little volume fills a long-open gap in the roster of state bird lists for, except for a nominal list prepared by John LeConte in 1849, there has been no state-wide account of the birds of Georgia. That there have been many active ornithologists in the state and many important contributions to the ornithology of the region is without question, as may be ascertained by a glance at the historical narrative by Dr. Murphrey and the annotated bibliography at the close of the volume. The present publication summarizes the knowledge of the occurrence and local distribution of each of the 377 species and subspecies definitely recorded from Georgia and 23 others whose uncertainty has placed them in a hypothetical list. The forms whose status depends on few or unusual records are documented or discussed at greater length.

Dr. Murphrey has given short sketches of the work of the various individuals whose efforts through the years have made possible the accumulation of the data on which the present check-list is based, thus making an excellent historical summary of Georgia ornithology. The bibliography occupies thirty-two pages and is rendered particularly useful by numerous explanatory notes. Local bird clubs and local lists are tabulated separately, and a map of the state, with explanatory notes, is added.

There is still much to be done, no doubt, in the study of Georgia bird life, as there is in many other parts of the country, but the present check-list furnishes an excellent foundation on which future distributional studies may be based. The authors and the Georgia Ornithological Society, under whose sponsorship the booklet was prepared as Occasional Publication no. 2 of the Society, have rendered useful service in the issue of the check-list.—J. T. ZIMMER.

California birds.²—This important work was commenced by Grinnell in 1934 and was half-completed at his death in 1939. Dr. Miller then took up the task and

¹ GREENE, EARLE R.; GRIFFIN, WILLIAM W.; ODUM, EUGENE P.; STODDARD, HERBERT L.; AND TOMKINS, IVAN R. 'Birds of Georgia. A preliminary check-list and bibliography of Georgia ornithology. With a historical narrative by Eugene E. Murphrey.' 8vo, 111 pp., frontisp., map. University of Georgia Press, Athens, Georgia, 1945. Price \$2.00.

² GRINNELL, JOSEPH, AND MILLER, ALDEN H. 'The Distribution of the Birds of California.' Pacific Coast Avifauna, No. 27, 4to, 608 pp., frontisp. (col.), figs. 1-57, 1945. Cooper Ornithological Club, Berkeley, California. Price \$10.00.

carried it to its successful conclusion, revising and bringing up to date the earlier portion to give uniformity to the whole.

The long list of California birds is taken up by species and subspecies following a preliminary check-list in which common names are provided for all the species as well as the subspecies (as is proposed for the next edition of the A. O. U. Check-List). A list of synonyms under each form in the general text gives the different scientific and vernacular names by which it has been known in California, and a statement of the general status of abundance and seasonal occurrence follows.

The geographic range of each form within the state is given in detail, often with the specified localities of record or, in some cases, the general regions, only. These are well-documented, not necessarily credited to the first recorder but, rather, to the most adequate reference. A general discussion of range and distribution in California, and sometimes extralimitally, introduces this paragraph.

A following paragraph discusses the habitats frequented by the bird in question, often with information as to its behavior, food, or other characteristics. Fifty-seven distributional maps show the positions of the localities of record and those from which material has been examined. These cover most of the species which have more than one Californian subspecies. This paragraph brings the knowledge of the local distribution up to date, and although future investigations may necessitate some alterations in minor details, there appears to be little likelihood of significant changes. Debatable records are discarded or discussed, and if the Californian status is entirely dependent on such records, the form is relegated to the hypothetical list at the end of the volume where appropriate comments are given.

Dr. Miller has taken the opportunity to accept or reject a number of proposals on classification although no detailed taxonomic discussions are given. The vernacular nomenclature follows the plan, long ago advocated by Dr. Grinnell, of incorporating the name of the species in that of the subspecies. This has resulted in some very cumbersome names that are likely to be abbreviated in ordinary usage except in formal written accounts where the scientific trinomials will serve the purpose better. The system does not accomplish all that is claimed for it in any case for, while it may show that the "Western Red-tailed Hawk" and the "Harlan Red-tailed Hawk" are conspecifics, it fails to do so for the "Common Rough-legged Hawk" and the "Ferruginous Rough-legged Hawk" which are not. Many familiar names are supplanted by new combinations and in case of future altered views as to certain relationships, other changes will be necessary. Since vernacular names are not subject to the rules governing scientific names and are not even allowable as criteria on which the identity of a scientific name may be based, the need for the proposed changes is not clearly apparent.

The matter of vernacular names does not, however, affect the great value of the distributional data which furnish the real text of the book. Publication is promised of another volume dealing with a number of distributional factors that are not treated in the present work. The appearance of this future volume will be awaited with interest.—J. T. ZIMMER.

General Ornithology.¹—Professor Hann has prepared these two books primarily for the use of college students taking his course of ornithology at the University of Michigan, but they should prove useful to amateur ornithologists in general, and the

¹ HANN, HARRY W. 'An introduction to ornithology.' 4to (lithoprinted), 6 pp. + XVIII + 279, numerous figs., 1945. Ann Arbor, Michigan. Price \$3.25.

HANN, HARRY W. 'Ornithology Notebook.' 4to (lithoprinted; loose-leaf), [V] + 45, 2 figs., 1945. Ann Arbor, Michigan. Price \$1.25.

author is pleased to offer them to interested persons who desire to purchase them at the prices given.

The 'Introduction to Ornithology' gives first a summary of the biological characteristics of birds and other general facts of interest (pp. 1-XVIII). Part 2 (pp. 1-251) is devoted to a résumé of the birds of the world, with emphasis on North American species. The orders and suborders, or some of their principal families, are described briefly as to characteristics and, often, behavior and frequently some outstanding members of the family are further discussed. If the family is, at least in part, North American, the examples are taken from this country; the discussions thus embrace a large part of the North American avifauna. A very useful feature is the inclusion of a great number of distributional maps of certain species and their subspecies with specific winter ranges usually added.

The "Notebook" (loose-leaf) is designed for laboratory and homework and gives outlines for projected study with numerous queries and accompanying blanks to be filled out by the student. Sixteen check-lists of Michigan birds are included for use on field trips and for semester records.

The two publications seem well-adapted for their intended purpose and could also be used satisfactorily for home study by those interested who do not have opportunities to attend a school where courses in ornithology are given.—J. T. ZIMMER.

Birds of Timor and Sumba.¹—This paper leaves little to be added to our taxonomic knowledge of the avifauna of Timor and Sumba. Mayr has presented a masterful analysis of the birds and their origin, quite up to his usual standard of excellence.

The paper is divided into the following seven main headings which show the scope of the paper: The Birds of Timor; The Birds of Sumba; Taxonomic Notes on the Birds of Timor and Sumba; Altitudinal variation on Timor: Notes on the Zoögeography of Timor and Sumba.

Timor was explored ornithologically as early as 1801, and collected on at intervals until Stein's visit, on whose collections Mayr's paper is based. In spite of Timor's long ornithological history, Stein was able to add no less than 25 species and subspecies to the Timor list of which 17 are resident. The total now known from the island is 176 species and subspecies, including 31 migrants.

In spite of its 32,000 square kilometers, Timor has a poor avifauna due to its great aridity and peripheral position. It is, however, no exception to the distributional pattern of other elongated islands of the East Indies, for it shows marked faunistic differences between its eastern and western ends.

Unlike Timor, Sumba was one of the last East Indian Islands to be explored ornithologically. The first collection was made there by Reidel in 1880. Since then numerous other collections have been made and when Stein visited the island he was able to add only 13 new birds to the Sumba list. Of these, eight were winter visitors and one of the remaining five was endemic to that island. To date, 129 species and subspecies are known from the island.

Sumba, lying about 20 miles south of Flores, supports an avifauna very similar to that of the latter. On account of the dry climate and lack of rain forest the avifauna is poorer. There is no very marked endemism on either Sumba or Timor.

The paper is accompanied by four interesting distributional maps. Nineteen new subspecies are described. They are:—*Synoicus ypsilophorus castaneus* (Alor I.), *Ducula aenea pallidinucha* (Tobea I., Buton Strait), *Ducula cineracea schistacea*

¹ MAYR, ERNST. 'The Birds of Timor and Sumba.' Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., 83 (Art. 2): 123-194, figs. 1-4, July 11, 1944.

(Weten I.), *Tanygnathus megalorhynchus hellmayri* (Timor I.), *Caprimulgus affinis undulatus* (Flores I.), *Caprimulgus affinis timorensis* (Timor I.), *Collocalia esculenta perneglecta* (Water I.), *Mirafra javanica timorensis* (Timor I.), *Turdus poliocephalus sterlingi* (Timor I.), *Saxicola caprata cognata* (Babar I.), *Pnoepyga pusilla timorensis* (Timor I.), *Bradypterus montis timorensis* (Timor I.), *Seicercus montis paulinæ* (Timor I.), *Dendrobyastes hyperythrus clarae* (Timor I.), *Monarcha cinerascens brunneus* (Great Banda I.), *Philemon inornatus robustus* (Timor I.), *Piprisoma obsoletum tinctum* (Sumba I.), *Zosterops montana steini* (Timor I.), and *Lonchura punctulata sumbae* (Sumba I.).

Birds of Brazil.¹—This volume supplements an earlier one, published in the *Revista de Museu Paulista*, 22: I–XVIII, 1–566, 1938, and completes this valuable catalogue. The present part contains the Tyrannoidea and Passeres.

Dr. Pinto has at his command the extensive collections of birds of his native country that are preserved in the Department of Zoology of the Secretariat of Agriculture (formerly the Section of Zoology of the Museu Paulista) and his own field experience in various parts of Brazil. He has thus been enabled to examine critically a large part of the native avifauna and to express studied opinions on much of the remainder. The result is shown in the amount of information presented in this work.

Bibliographic references are limited to those of the original description of the accepted name and synonyms and to various combinations, with some additional citations, but notation is made of the volume and page in Hellmayr's 'Catalogue of the Birds of the Americas' where fuller bibliographies are given. The first part gave similar reference to the 'Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum.' The distribution of each subspecies or monotypic species is detailed, including extralimital localities. This is followed by a list of the material preserved in the collection, with full data.

In the extensive footnotes are given many critical notes on the taxonomy and distribution of certain forms. They are thoroughly documented and supply much useful information, sometimes revisory in character. No new forms are described, but one new name is proposed—*Neopelma aurifrons chrysolophum* to replace *Muscicapa luteocephala* Lafresnaye (incorrectly cited as "Neopelma" *luteocephala*) which Dr. Pinto has been able to recognize (with which the reviewer agrees) as distinct from typical *aurifrons*.

The plates (by T. G. Meissner) are interesting and useful and give representations of 59 species and subspecies, some of which, at least, have not been adequately, if at all, figured heretofore.

Dr. Pinto is to be congratulated on the successful completion of a long task. Students of Neotropical birds will find the catalogue most useful, both as a comprehensive statement of the status of Brazilian birds and as a foundation for future work.—
J. T. ZIMMER.

Prairie Chicken studies.²—Mr. Schwartz has given the results of extensive studies of the Prairie Chicken in Missouri, begun in December, 1938, and continued for five years, with the addition of some data subsequently acquired. It is a thorough account of the various activities of the species, the conditions governing its distribution in the state, and suggestions for its management.

¹ PINTO, OLIVÉRIO MÁRIO DE OLIVEIRA. 'Catálogo das Aves do Brasil. 2. a. Parte.' Royal 8vo, XI + 700, 15 pls. (5 col.), 1944. Dept. Zool., Secy. Agr., Industr. e Comércio, São Paulo, Brazil.

² SCHWARTZ, CHARLES W. 'The Ecology of the Prairie Chicken in Missouri.' University of Missouri Studies, 20 (1): 1–99, 16 pls., figs. 1–4, 8 fold. maps, 1945. University of Missouri, Columbia, Mo. Price \$1.50.

The discussion of the birds' behavior on the 'booming' grounds is particularly detailed and brings out numerous facts that have received little or no attention heretofore. The interesting possibility is suggested that young males of the year may take part in the activities on the 'booming' grounds during the autumn display. Definite territories on the grounds were found to be established and individual birds were noted on the same territory on successive days, although the boundaries were somewhat flexible and were not maintained whenever an occupant temporarily left his holdings. The autumn grounds are fewer in number than those of the spring although part of the spring grounds make up the autumn areas. The same grounds may be used over a period of years—in one known case for 40 years—although various conditions may cause a change.

The Missouri population is at present on the decline as it has been before, since there is a periodic fluctuation shared by various other birds and animals. Correlations are made between the birds' distribution and soil types although no direct connection is claimed other than that which is related to agricultural land use. Moderately poor soil, less fit for cultivation, thus favors a larger grouse population. The birds are absent from 86 per cent of the potential range within the state.

Foods are tabulated, showing a great preponderance of vegetable matter from September through April, but only about 60 per cent at other times. Mortality factors are discussed with the conclusion that illegal hunting and unfavorable agricultural practices are the principal deleterious factors.

The plates contain 32 fine photographs of the Prairie Chicken and its local habitats. With the exception of five they do not duplicate those of the earlier volume of pictures by Mr. Schwartz, 'The Prairie Chicken in Missouri,' published by the Missouri Conservation Commission in 1944.

Naturalists and others interested in one of America's fine game birds will find much valuable information in this excellent report.—J. T. ZIMMER.

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