

REPORT OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE FOR 1961

Van Tyne Research Grants. An award was made to Mr. M. Philip Kahl, Jr., a graduate student at the University of Georgia, for the purchase of equipment needed in the study of temperature regulation in the Wood Ibis.

Review Papers for The Auk. A series of review articles covering various phases of ornithology is planned. These will summarize the literature and give an evaluation of current research on particular topics. The purpose of these articles is to aid bird students in keeping informed about areas of ornithology outside of their own special interests. The first of these review articles, now in preparation, deals with the regulation of water balance in birds. Arrangements are being made for future reviews of experimental work in avian genetics and of concepts and terminology in ethology as applied to birds.

Current Literature. The A.O.U. Council authorized the Research Committee to enter into negotiations with *Biological Abstracts* for the distribution to all A.O.U. members of reprints of abstracts of bird articles published in that periodical. If suitable arrangements for this service can be made, it is expected that the pages in *The Auk* now devoted to "Recent Literature" will become available for additional scientific articles.

Electronic Storing of Bibliographical References and Research Data. Someone has said that the volume of scientific information doubles every eight and one-half years. This means that within the next 25 years ornithological literature will increase eight times. We already have trouble keeping up with the literature in our various fields—what will it be like 25 years from now? What can be done about it?

The answer seems to lie in the use of electronics for the mechanical storing of data on IBM cards or magnetic tape so that any portion of it can be retrieved automatically as desired. This is entirely feasible and practicable. Likewise, raw data in some areas of ornithology could advantageously be put on cards or tape—for instance, life-history data from both published and unpublished studies. A number of business concerns, research laboratories, government agencies, and university departments are already making use of such facilities, and a few societies are becoming interested. The AIBS has set up a Biological Sciences Communication Project to study the problem and to encourage the development of centers for the storage and rapid retrieval of information in specialized areas of biology. Some of us believe that the A.O.U. should take aggressive action, beginning immediately, to establish such a center for ornithological information. This will require world-wide cooperation of ornithologists as probably not more than one center needs to be established available to bird students in all countries.

This center could be established at some university or institution which already has the necessary equipment and facilities. A small staff will need to be employed to collect the data, convert it to code, process it into the machine, and handle correspondence. If properly done, any ornithologist could then request a list of literature citations or a summary of raw data on any topic for the payment of a small fee, and this information could be mechanically retrieved for him in typewritten form in a few minutes time. It would seem that only by some such system as this that scientific investigators in the future will be able to keep from becoming overwhelmed by the mountains of literature that will accumulate and be able to plan for new research.

It is estimated that five years' time and perhaps \$40,000 will be needed to establish such an ornithological information center. After that the center might possibly become self-supporting from fees for services rendered. Its value would increase with time as the volume of information that it has stored away increases. Young ornithologists, looking forward to a professional career in research and teaching, should be especially interested in this project. Much needs to be done: investigate various procedures and costs, locate an institution where a center could be established, obtain financial support, employ a staff to work full-time on the project, work out a code system for classifying ornithological information, and, finally, to supervise the running of the project, once it is under way. We invite the correspondence, ideas, and especially the help of anyone interested in this proposal.

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