

THE CONDOR.

Bulletin of the Cooper Ornithological Club.

A BI-MONTHLY EXPONENT OF CALIFORNIAN ORNITHOLOGY.

Vol. 2. No. 2.

Santa Clara, Cal., March-April, 1900.

\$1.00 a Year.

PROMINENT CALIFORNIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS.

III. A. M. SHIELDS.

FEW oologists are better or more favorably known than Mr. A. M. Shields, the subject of this brief sketch, and those who have become acquainted during the past fifteen or twenty years with this active field collector, through his graphic and accurate contributions to the life histories of birds or his genial personal correspondence, will appreciate the satisfaction of the editors of *THE CONDOR* in the presentation herein of a late portrait, the first one of Mr. Shields to appear in an ornithological journal.

In looking over the file of the dear old *Young Oologist* (Vol. I, 1884), we come across some of the first published articles by Mr. Shields on collecting, when his home was at Los Angeles, and then it was that with rapturous interest we followed his experiences at "Nigger Slough," and "Gospel Swamp," of which he wrote by way of explanation: "The swamp part of the name is all right, but I could never just see where the 'Gospel' part of the business comes in, for the country itself, full of dark sloughs and deep bog-holes, is very far from being gospel-like."

Alexander M. Shields was born in Knoxville, East Tennessee, April 28, 1865. He has been an egg collector and student of bird-life for over twenty years, and is, as will be seen, not quite old enough to be a great grandfather. He was always an ardent naturalist and spent all his idle moments in early boyhood in reading all available books on natural history.

"I began my collecting experience," says Mr. Shields, "when I was ten or twelve years of age, and collected eggs of 'brownies,' 'chippies,' 'blue canaries'

and other correctly named (?) local species, and used the time-honored cigar boxes to contain my scientifically (!) collected, end-blown specimens which were valued by their number and colors more than anything else." By the usual course of evolution experienced by many of us, scientific methods were followed and the Shields' collection now represents probably 500 species and sub-species, over 3000 sets, aggregating ten to fifteen thousand eggs.

Mr. Shields' home is now in San Francisco, and although he occupies an important position as Pacific Coast Manager of the Equitable Life Assurance Society, he is still enabled to devote some time, although much less than formerly, to scientific matters. He is an enthusiastic sportsman as well as naturalist, and one of the phenomenal wing shots of California. He is president of the Empire Gun Club, and a member of six other shooting organizations, while retaining his active membership in the Cooper Ornithological Club and his association with the A. O. U., California Academy of Sciences and several other natural history clubs.

Mr. Shields' first published paper was on the "Nesting of the Black-necked Stilt," (*Young Oologist*, Vol. I, No. 3) and he has always made a special study of the waterbirds. Among some later and noteworthy contributions to learning may be mentioned his papers on the ducks; description of "An Ibis Rookery in California," "Collecting an Egg of the California Condor," and a very valuable article, recently appearing in the *Bulletin of the Cooper Ornithological Club*, on the nesting of the Fulvous Tree Duck. H. R. T.



ALEXANDER M. SHIELDS.