

Individual Aid in the Welfare of the Club.

The opening editorial in the September CONDOR deals fittingly with the many disadvantages under which the Cooper Club labors owing to the Club's membership being scattered over so much territory, but "which may in the future be largely remedied" etc. The article is well written and forms a rough summary of the general conditions incident to the management of the Cooper Club of today. It also shows that out of a total active membership of 170 or more, a small minority practically constitutes the entire working force and considering this fact the growth of the Club in the past eight years from four members to its present size, reflects greatly on the minority. Besides this though, a heavy percentage of the original reading matter found in THE CONDOR comes from the pens of this same minority gratuitously. This latter is not mentioned in the editorial quoted, but any one can assure himself of the truth of it by looking over the past numbers of THE CONDOR.

So much for the enviable showing made by those members constituting the minority. Now about the remaining members, composing the majority, not that I care to make invidious comparisons, but because due consideration of the subject should prove of value to any member. All of us are interested to a greater or less degree in the study of birds, although some are undoubtedly too busy in other paths of life to do much more than welcome the advent of THE CONDOR on alternate months. Some few are beginners, and the insecurity of their foothold in the study prevents them at present from taking an active part in the work of the Club.

A great many keep records or casual notes of one kind or another on the bird life around them, and some elaborate theirs no doubt, into series of notes, complete as far as possible on some more note-worthy species or groups of species. In this way in the course of a year or so, considerable amount of material is jotted down, most of it of value to the writer or he would not bother about it. The greater part of it consists of little facts or incidents pertinent to bird history and while of value to the individual, it would prove equally as interesting to the Club-at-large. Probably a large share of these notes or records are written and kept by Club members who, though too far removed from headquarters to take an active part in the transaction of routine business, are still, in every sense of the word, active field workers. Many of them live in the more remote corners of the state and for that very reason what ornithological work they do is possessed of a greater value, for they are resident observers in localities where other members can at the best pay only strays visits of a few weeks duration.

But for all that we rarely hear from them either in the regular Club meetings or through the pages of THE CONDOR and the question is where does all that good material go to? In conclusion, the acknowledged object of the Club is the highest advancement of the science of ornithology in California, and it should also be the aim of every one of its members to aid as far as possible in the mutual advancement of all the members, rather than the self-advancement of individual members.

JOHN J. WILLIAMS.

Applegate, Cal.



COMMUNICATIONS.

RECONNOISSANCES; A REPLY.

Editors THE CONDOR:—

The co-authors of "A Summer Reconnaissance in the West," Wilson Bulletin No. 33, seem to take exception to my "destructive" review and criticism which appeared in THE CONDOR recently.

If they had made it as plain in Bulletin No. 33 as they do in their replies, that the list was not intended to be of any general scientific value, the paper would not have called for criticism from anyone. If a crime has been committed it was in taking the statements seriously, but knowing of Mr. Jones' previous careful and conscientious work about Oberlin. I have no apologies to make for supposing this was intended to be equally accurate.

Certainly if a western ornithologist should visit Oberlin for a week or ten days and record two to four birds that do not occur there at all, and a number of others as rare as the Carolina Paroquet or the Short-billed Marsh Wren, he would expect to be called upon by the whole local club for explanation. In this case I was delegated to do it.

Admitting that the Reconnaissance was not intended to have any special value, why should exceptions be taken when inaccuracies are pointed out? We are pleased to note that another trip is being planned "with scientific settings," which will insure accuracy and therefore be welcome by all who are wrestling with the intricacies of geographical distribution in California.

Pasadena, Cal.

FRANK S. DAGGETT.

ADVICE FOR OOLOGISTS.

Editor CONDOR: Many a time when blowing a small egg with a pipe I have nicked it when introducing the pipe through the small blow-hole. But I don't do that any more. Instead of using a blowpipe I now pull a small grass stem and insert the soft white end of it into the egg. This delicate end can be bent in any direction, and eggs can be blown with smaller holes than with a glass pipe. Everyone of these small grass stems is a hollow tube, and some of them can be found that are no larger in diameter than a needle. They are gathered just as you want to use them, and your eggs can be blown as soon as taken. Now don't go to work and try to introduce the stiff green

end of the grass stem, but put the part in the egg that is soft and white near the joint.

Respectfully,
R. P. SHARPLES,

Westchester, Pa.



PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED.

NORTH AMERICAN FAUNA NO. 21 consists of two papers prepared by Wilfred H. Osgood entitled "Natural History of the Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia," and "Natural History of the Cook Inlet Region, Alaska." These are based in the main on explorations made during the summer of 1900 by the author, with Edmund Heller as assistant, under the direction of the Biological Survey. Thirteen pages of the first paper are occupied by a list of the birds known to inhabit the Queen Charlotte Islands. These 96 species are variously annotated, but chiefly in a technical vein. Two insular forms are described as new, *Dryobates picoideus*, related to the Harris Woodpecker, and *Cyanocitta stelleri carlotte*, resembling the Steller Jay. A dark northwest-coast form of the Saw-whet Owl is also distinguished as *Nyctala acadica scotea*. The author has resuscitated an ancient synonym of Gmelin's *Picus ruber* for the northwest coast race of the Red-breasted Sapsucker, calling it *Sphyrapicus ruber flaviventris* (Vieillot). The reasons for so doing are not clearly explained but the implication is, apparently, that Gmelin's *ruber* should be restricted to the form occupying the arid Boreal Zone of the interior and southern California. Without discussing the matter at length, it has seemed to us that this is a most unwarranted procedure. Although the habitat of *Picus ruber* is (erroneously?) stated to be "Cayenne," it was probably based on Captain Cook's description, the same as *Picus flaviventris*. Either *ruber* should be rejected altogether, or it should apply, as heretofore understood, to the northwest-coast form.

In the second paper, ten pages are devoted to a list of the birds of the Cook Inlet Region. Of the seventy-seven species enumerated, the known ranges of several are notably extended. The Dusky Horned Owl, Rufous Hummer and Rocky Mountain Creeper probably find their westernmost stations in this region. The unexpected discovery of the White-tailed Ptarmigan so far northwest is also an evidence of energetic field-work, in a country where the collector does not always meet with "one continual round of pleasure!"—J. GRINNELL.

BULLETIN NO. 15 OF THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, DIVISION OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY, prepared by Dr. Sylvester D. Judd, treats of "The Relation of Sparrows to Agriculture." Aside from its bearing along econ-

omic lines, this paper obviously adds much to our knowledge of the general habits and ecology of sparrows. The account of observations made in the field is very entertaining, and evinces an unusually acute perception on the part of the observer. The experiments carried on with caged birds are also quite suggestive. It was found that so-called "protectively colored" insects, even though presented to a song sparrow, partly covered by earth of the same hues, were discovered and eaten by the bird with remarkable promptness; and that some "warningly colored" insects, provided with odors and taste very disgusting to a person were as greedily devoured; but others, after the first taste, were subsequently avoided. The birds showed an extremely acute power of discrimination, for they carefully avoided stinging insects; though stingless species of similar appearance, and which are usually cited as examples of "protective mimicry," were at once devoured. This is rather discouraging testimony for the theorists. Yet there are many enemies of insects besides birds, and these may be oftener baffled by the color artifices than are the keen-sighted sparrows.

The conclusions reached in regard to the economic value of sparrows, is very favorable. In fact they are said to be the most beneficial of any groups of birds so far studied. This statement does not however include the English sparrow, which is declared to be unqualifiedly obnoxious wherever it occurs.—J. G.

DIGEST OF GAME LAWS FOR 1901. By T. S. Palmer and H. W. Olds.—It is stated that "the object of this report is to present in convenient form the provisions of the laws now in force, including the amendments enacted during the present year." Some 200 changes in the game laws of the various states has necessitated a complete revision of former bulletins, so that the present Bulletin brings the game laws of each state and territory into convenient form. Every detail has been gone into with great system and tables covering almost every phase of the open and close seasons of each species of game have been prepared, with the result that the public has at its command a compendium of the game laws such as could result from scarcely any other source than a government bureau with its thorough and systematic work. The bulletin is quite as much of a necessity to ornithologists interested in bird protection as to sportsmen.—C. B.

BIRDS OF MADISON COUNTY, N. Y. By George C. Embury (Bulletin of the Dept. of Geology and Natural History, Colgate University). Hamilton, N. Y., 1901.

This is one of the neatest local lists it has been our pleasure to receive, being, as its title indicates, a list of the birds of Madison County, Central New York. 192 species and a hypothetical list of 16 species are recorded, with