

THE CONDOR.

Bulletin of the

COOPER ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB OF CALIFORNIA.

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EDITORIAL.

Why Not Hold an A. O. U. Congress in the West?

Apropos the projected State Meeting of the Cooper Ornithological Club in 1903, in anniversary of its ten years' existence, it occurs to us that this should prove a most opportune and excellent time for an ornithological jubilee, so to speak, having for its aim the assembling of ornithologists from both the East and the West. The question suggests itself: "Why may not an A. O. U. Congress be held in the West?" We know that such a movement would have the warm approval of all western ornithologists, while we believe that our eastern confreres would correspondingly enthuse over the prospect of a western outing.

Within the past few years ornithology in the West and especially in California, has experienced a decided and substantial boom, which means that our coast workers have taken a greater interest in the workings of the A. O. U. We know that the annual Congress of the Union has frequently led many to wish that something less than 3,000 miles might intervene between the West and the scene of ornithological activity. At the same time the West, generally speaking, has had no valid claim to a meeting of the Union, and yet we believe such a session would be productive of much good.

Comparatively few of our eastern workers are familiar, through actual experience, with the geographical conditions affecting bird life in California. Frankly we believe that a few outings to favored localities would result in a fuller appreciation of the elements which may differentiate a bird within a restricted range.

We believe that a study of this feature alone would interest our eastern friends, and no doubt Mr. Grinnell will consent to illustrate to visitors the inherent intuitiveness which separates the yellowthroat of the tules from its cousin in a nearby grass plat.

But aside from the inducements which a western meeting should offer to our eastern associates, California would most certainly appreciate the honor accorded by a meeting of the Union. We can, in advance, safely bespeak a cordial welcome and a generous reception should a western session be deemed possible. It occurs to us that Palo Alto—admirably situated to insure a strong attendance and for observation purposes—would be a model place for a congress. It is easy to perceive that such a gathering would be far-reaching in its effects. Most of our western workers have but little conception of an A. O. U. congress. To them it would mean a greater appreciation of the Union and its work. Among the older workers acquaintances would be renewed, while with others friendships would be created which would endure for years.

The Cooper Ornithological Club owes much to the cordial spirit which pervades its meetings and which exists between members. We presume that the same element has been infused into the Union. At any rate it will not be found lacking in California. We therefore earnestly and cordially present the request: May not California be favored with the A. O. U. meeting in 1903?

Readers of THE CONDOR must have been impressed with Mr. Vernon Bailey's article in our last issue, reciting the devastation among the water-birds frequenting certain lakes in California, Oregon and Nevada. The fact that such vast and interesting rookeries exist should enthuse our western ornithologists, and every effort should be put forth to prevent this feature of an otherwise barren region begin destroyed.

Mr. Wm. Dutcher, Chairman of the A. O. U. Committee on Bird Protection, is about to gather data concerning the present status of these water-birds and to provide all possible protection. At the same time it becomes the duty of ornithologists residing in California, Nevada and Oregon to lend material assistance and to co-operate with Mr. Dutcher in his praise-worthy work.

This incident also emphasizes the necessity of a bird bill, which California at least would have had in force but for the stupidity and apathy of its governor. But the next legislature will present another opportunity for work, and we may confidently look forward to the day when the scores of such natural breeding grounds as Tule Lake will remain undisturbed throughout the year.

The June issue of *American Ornithology* contains a half-tone photograph labelled "Young Purple Grackles," purported to have been taken by Ross Nicholas. The original photograph of this interesting group was taken by Herman T. Bohlman, Oregon's well-known

bird photographer, and was published in THE CONDOR for November-December 1901. We would suggest to Bro. Reed that some one has deceived him. In fact all publishers find it a necessity to discriminate closely in this day of too-frequent fraud photography, and if we mistake not, among the hundreds of bird pictures published in various periodicals during the past year, are a number suggestive of the fact that the subject had lost all interest in mundane things long before it made its advent before the camera.

In the minutes of the May meeting of the Northern Division published in THE CONDOR for May the paper entitled "The American Ornithologists' Union of 1840-45" should have been credited to Mr. Witmer Stone. Mr. H. W. Fowler kindly secured and presented the paper before the Club, much to the enjoyment of those present.

CORRESPONDENCE.

ALBEMARLE ID., Galapagos, April 1,
via Ecuador and San Francisco, June 30.
Editor THE CONDOR:

We are just down from the top of the island where we've been skinning for a few days; scaring wild cattle and dogs, getting rained on and looking at a sulphur factory have been secondary amusements. The little shot pistol is all right in this country either for birds or cattle. Have been using it altogether except on flamingos. There we used a shot-gun and secured several. Saw their nests of mud from which the young had just walked. The most complete one was only six inches high on a rock in a lagoon. Several other nests in poor shape were within a foot and a set of four stilts was twenty feet away on the same rock but a foot above water.

The stilts nest here commonly judging by their actions. The flamingos were moulting and four of those shot had no primaries. They seem to shed them altogether. I noticed the birds did not fly, but walked about in the lagoon in which was six inches of water and two or three feet of mud. One of the most interesting things lately noticed in the bird line is the extreme tameness of the hawks up at the ranch. The natives hang up their meat outside the house, by the fire, or any place handy and if it isn't watched the hawks are liable to eat it all before leaving. I saw a native knock two on the head with a short stick while they were eating his meat.

Yesterday two of us were skinning a tortoise under a tree, throwing the meat a few feet away and soon there were ten hawks within fifteen feet of us in the grass eating the meat, while eight or ten more sat in the trees either

too full to eat or waiting for a chance. The small *Geospiza fuliginosa* which is the most common bird in the group is a great friend of the tortoise on the island. I have seen over a dozen different birds hopping about on different tortoise's backs, necks and heads. It is an easy way to get the grass seeds of which they are fond. The birds pick the seeds off the tortoise's head and nose while the neck is extended and on no occasion did the tortoise seem annoyed. I saw a bright red *Pyrocephalus* taking a ride on a tortoise's back the other day. He rode several feet before flying off. There are some large tortoise on this island about 500 pounds in weight at a low estimate. We hope to get one or two alive before leaving this island.

On Tower Island we struck a petrel colony,— a colony like those you read about. We saw some thousands of them flying about a cliff and they were evidently seeking nesting sites, as many of them would dart into a crack or crevice in the lava. I spent half a day bruising my hands on the rocks trying to find eggs. Found several shearwaters' eggs but no petrels. Among the thousands of birds seen not a single *O. gracialis* or *O. cryptoleucura* was observed, all of them being *P. lethys*.

I mentioned in a former letter that I had never seen but one young booby in a nest, tho' many with two eggs. Since then I have noted several Neboux's boobies with two young ones, all sizes up to a month old at least. Have seen two or three sets of three eggs of Neboux's boobies out of perhaps 100 nests examined. These boobies, the males especially, have a most comical manner of walking about while guarding the nesting site. It consists of a very high step with a critical inspection of the ground before him, tail pointing skyward and peculiar looking eyes and mien, are some of the characteristics. I think we have one or two photographs showing some of the poses.

The frigate birds interest me greatly. I have not yet been able to get a photograph showing the fullest sized pouch of the breeding male. Have seen dozens when without the camera or when in too much of a hurry to secure what was wanted. They are tame as other birds. I caught one on Tower Island with inflated pouch and did my best to diminish its size but failed. The males secure nearly all the nesting material, bringing it to the female who watches the nest and places the material. If a nest is left by both birds for half an hour no nest is there on their return, the males from the other nests having taken all of it. The loving caress and tender cooing of the males seem more fitting to a gentle dove than to these pirates who get most of their food from the boobies.

Buenos tarde,

R. H. BECK.