

until closely prest, when it would fly a short distance. After being chased up the beach some 200 yards it would fly out around the pursuer back to its original rendezvous. This procedure would be repeated over and over.

It is thus apparent that the stranger was a beach-comber in habits, just as are the song sparrows in the summer home of *M. m. caurina*, in Alaska, and quite different in habits from the resident race of the Humboldt Bay region. I am very much indebted to Mr. Clay for the above information, and especially for the privilege of putting his capture on record, it being, as far as I know, the first for California.—J. GRINNELL.

Red Phalarope in Southern California in Winter.—In the May number of *THE CONDOR* H. S. Swarth mentioned the scarcity of winter records for the Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) in California.

In November and December, 1907, C. B. Linton and myself found this species very abundant around Anacapa and Santa Cruz Islands. This note was published by Mr. Linton and may be found in *THE CONDOR*, Vol. X, 1908, p. 126. This was probably overlooked by Mr. Swarth.

Many specimens of this Phalarope were taken at this time and are now in the collections of Mr. Linton and myself. During the last week of November there were thousands of the birds and some remained well into December. I do not believe, however, that they staid thru the entire winter.—G. WILLETT.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

The New A. O. U. Check List.—Now that the Third Edition of the Check-List of North American Birds has actually appeared the student may at last discard with safety his worn-to-tatters 1895 copy, interlined, cross-out, emended, and procure for himself a clean new copy. Having done so, if he be of progressive tendency, mindful ever of the signs of advance in his field, he will at once begin again to interline, erase, re-instate, amplify. And herein lies the enormous scientific value of such a periodic compendium as the Check-List: it constitutes a basis for departure anew.

During the fifteen years which have elapsed—altogether too long a time to allow between revised editions of a work of this sort—since the publication of the Second Edition, numerous additions and changes in status relative to North American birds have resulted from the constant activity in their study. By means of frequent supplements, printed in *The Auk*, the A. O. U. Committee on Nomenclature has kept the public posted on those of the proposed changes of which it has approved. To the student who has watched this series of supplements, therefore, the new Check-List offers no startling innovations on this score. Since the classification and sequence employed in the Third Edition is practically the same as used in the Second, the only remaining really great point of improvement is in the much more full and accurately expressed statements of the ranges of species.

The adoption of the modern method of expressing animal distribution in terms of life zones leads to a conciseness of statement not before achieved. And the interpolation of a colored map of the Zones of North America, compiled by C. Hart Merriam and his assistants of the Biological Survey, gives to the reader unfamiliar with this method an invaluable key to the situation.

It is a recognized difficulty to build a statement of range consistent with all known facts and yet keep it within the small space necessitated by the practical limits of a hand-book. Loose statements in the ranges of species, as given in the Check-List, appear to be relatively rare. A few are apparent: The range of *Junco hyemalis pinosus* is stated to be "Coast strip of San Mateo and northern Monterey counties, California." There is thus no indication that the species is just as well known to occupy suitable ground in the intervening territory (Santa Cruz and Santa Clara counties). It is stated that *Melospiza lincolni lincolni* "winters from San Jacinto Mountains" etc.; we were not aware that the bird wintered in any of our mountains.

The breeding range of *Passerculus rostratus rostratus* is given as "unknown, but probably from about San Pedro, California, to" etc.; this is most emphatically *not* probable, as the coastal localities of southern California are well known to have been pretty thoroly searched without finding any conclusive evidence of the breeding of the species within the state. The breeding range of a species cannot be considered as established by one or two instances of occurrence of individual birds in summer.

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fornia, Oregon and Washington, as might have been expected proved to be based on our Band-tailed Pigeon. As far as is known the Passenger Pigeon never occurred west of the Rocky Mountains. It appears now to be wholly extinct everywhere.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

(continued from page 175)

We object to such a statement as this, under *Prionofinus cinereus*: "accidental once off coast of California." "But one record", would have been better, as the latter phrase implies limitations rather upon our own knowledge. "Accidental" is an unwarranted assumption of what in many cases proves to be untrue, as when a species, previously unknown, upon closer observation, or exploration of new localities, is found to be of regular occurrence within the region under consideration. Then, too, an unusual visitant may make its appearance under circumstances quite apart from any *accident*. The term is not a well-chosen one.

In the matter of classification, as we have already remarked, there is no change. It is extremely regrettable that a new classification, based on Gadow, which, we are informed in the Preface, Ridgway and Stejneger had undertaken to prepare for this Edition, was not finally adopted and installed thruout. Instead, the classification and sequence is that of the original A. O. U. Check-List, issued 25 years ago!

Ornithology is wonderfully fortunate in that it offers a field of pleasurable interest to the amateur scientist, whose numbers increase year by year. We rejoice in this. At the same time there is clearly threatened the danger that the serious science itself will suffer. This appears all the more imminent when its few trained and professional constituents begin to defer to popular (amateur) preferences. The A. O. U. Committee "on Nomenclature and Classification" is looked to from other fields of science as a representative body, to be expected in its publications to present the very latest results of ornithological research. The committee admits that the modern system of classification, adopted in most of the standard ornithological works of today, is desirable; yet it adheres to the system of 25 years ago because of feared *inconvenience*. While any system, of any period, may be expected and *hoped* to change, as knowledge increases, it is certainly due to amateurs and professional students in all fields alike that authoritative treatises, such

as is the A. O. U. Check-List, provide in all respects an up-to-date exposition of its subject.

In the statuses of species and subspecies there appears to be a sad lack of consistency as to rank of the lesser differentiated forms. An extreme example is "*Thryomanes leucophrys*," of San Clemente Island. Why not *Thryomanes bewicki leucophrys*, and thus unify the treatment of all of the various isolated forms inhabiting the Santa Barbara islands? Evidently there is no regularly-adhered-to criterion for subspecific status. Note the following: *Passerculus beldingi* and *Passerculus sandwichensis bryanti*; *Junco aikenii*, *Junco hyemalis hyemalis*, *Junco hyemalis oregonus*, and *Junco bairdi*; *Corvus caurinus* and *Corvus brachyrhynchos hesperis*; *Creciscus jamaicensis* and *Creciscus coturniculus*; *Rallus levipes* and *Rallus obsoletus*; *Arquatella maritima maritima*, *Arquatella maritima coeui* and *Arquatella maritima ptilocnemis*; *Leucosticte griseonucha*, *Leucosticte tephrocotis tephrocotis* and *Leucosticte tephrocotis littoralis*. After all, is consistency in this regard attainable until we return to the old-fashioned but non-ambiguous pure binomial system of nomenclature? There are cases where to revive a former usage is in reality a step forward.

Referring now to the employment of vernacular names, we are disappointed to observe that the useless possessive is retained in personal names. For instance, we are again forced to read "Cooper's Tanager", instead of the more euphonious and truthful Cooper Tanager; "Samuels's Song Sparrow" for Samuels Song Sparrow. It would seem that here, in the matter of vernacular names, the convenience and preferences of the majority of popular bird-students might have been consulted to better purpose than in the system of classification adopted.

Then, too, we might have well been permitted to call our California Condor by that name instead of California "*Vulture*"; Intermediate Sparrow instead of "Gambel's" Sparrow; Sierra Junco instead of "Thurber's" Junco; Western Kingbird instead of "Arkansas" Kingbird; Tawny Creeper instead of "California" Creeper; Spurred Towhee instead of "San Diego" Towhee, and Mountain Towhee instead of "Spurred" Towhee. A still more flagrant case is the retention of "House Finch" as against California Linnet, even tho the latter had been announced (*Auk*, 1909, p. 303) as chosen.

A distinctly unhappy error seems to have been committed in not providing subspecies with separate qualifying terms. For instance, there is Song Sparrow (for *Melospiza melodia melodia*), Desert Song Sparrow (for *M. m. fallax*), Mountain Song Sparrow, etc.; Bluebird, Azure Bluebird, Western Bluebird, etc.; Crow, Florida Crow, Western Crow, etc.; Gold-

finch, Pale Goldfinch, Willow Goldfinch, etc.; just as tho the first race described (usually eastern) was *the* species and the rest "sub-species of it." This latter is not an uncommon popular notion, but is of course wholly fallacious. Again, we are confronted with "Red-winged Blackbird" for *Agelaius phoeniceus phoeniceus*, while all the other subspecies and species are variously qualified "Red-wings". Wouldn't it have been better to have called the first, Eastern Red-wing, Eastern Bluebird, Eastern Song Sparrow, etc.?

Incidentally we note much inconsistency in the use of hyphens and capital initials in the vernacular names. For instance: Bush-Tit, Tree-duck, Tree Swallow, Meadowlark; Catbird, Sage Hen, Surf-bird; Spoonbill, Rough-leg, Song Sparrow; Red-wing, Redhead; Pintail, Red-tail. However, general typographical errors are extremely few; in fact we have detected only five.

It will have been noted that the above criticisms largely appertain to the Pacific Coast, with which portion of North America the reviewer happens to be most familiar. It is not to be inferred however that the same proportion of criticisms could be advanced with like reason for those portions of the Check-List relating most closely to eastern North America, for the very good reason that the personnel of the Committee is entirely of the East!

After all these criticisms, CONDOR readers may have come not unfairly by the idea that the present reviewer is either hypercritical or harbors some particular grudge; but we do not aspire to either undesirable state. We have perhaps more reason to welcome and put to immediate use the new Check-List than the majority of bird students. We wish to emphasize with all fervor that in our belief the new Check-List is an immensely valuable thing to have.

We recognize the fact that its completion has only been possible thru the combined efforts of a number of altruistic men, who have been willing to expend quantities of time and effort in an undertaking which can bring no commensurate credit to each individual concerned. Let us therefore acknowledge sincere appreciation to the Committee in charge (Allen, Richmond, Brewster, Dwight, Merriam, Ridgway and Stone), for their very material service in thus contributing to the advancement of ornithology:

As brought out in the first paragraph of this review, the new Check-List cannot be rightly considered a permanent standard. It serves rather as a new basis (a most invaluable function) enabling students of North American birds to start out afresh in the more exact determination of distribution and systematic status of the species.—J. GRINNELL.

MINUTES OF COOPER CLUB MEETINGS

NORTHERN DIVISION

FEBRUARY.—The regular monthly meeting of the Northern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was held on the evening of Saturday, February 12. In the early part of the evening the members attended a stereopticon lecture by Mr. W. L. Finley, delivered in South Hall, of the University of California, under the auspices of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. Mr. Finley spoke of his experiences in the lake regions of northern California and southern Oregon, illustrating the remarks with a series of beautiful and very interesting pictures dealing mostly with the water birds of the region. An interested and highly appreciative audience filled the room to the limit of its capacity.

After the lecture the Cooper Club members present assembled in the lecture room of the Museum, where the meeting was called to order by the President. The minutes of the January meeting were read, and accepted as read. On motion the Secretary was instructed to cast the unanimous ballot of all present, electing to active membership the names presented at the last meeting.

The proposal to elect Dr. J. A. Allen to honorary membership in the Cooper Club, which was brought forward at the January meeting, was again read, and, on motion duly seconded and carried, the same was past. Applications for membership from Joseph L. Sloanaker, Raisin, California, and Percy L. Judd, Chico, California, both proposed by W. Lee Chambers, were presented and laid over until the next meeting.

After the business before the meeting had been disposed of, Mr. Finley exhibited a large number of his beautiful bird photographs, a treat much appreciated by those present.

H. W. CARRIGER, *Secretary*.

MARCH.—The March meeting of the Northern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was held on Saturday evening, March 26, in the lecture room of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley. The meeting was called to order at 8:30 P.M., with Senior Vice-president Rosewell Wheeler in the chair. The minutes of the last meeting were read, and approved as read. On motion the Secretary was instructed to cast the unanimous vote of all present electing to active membership Messrs. J. L. Sloanaker, and Percy L. Judd, which names were presented at the last meeting.

The resignation of Miss Applegate of Haywards was read and laid over till the next meeting.