

OPEN LETTERS

EXPANSION OF THE A. O. U. CHECK-LIST
Editor THE CONDOR:

I always wondered why the American Ornithologist's Union did not live up to its name and include in the first Check-List all the species of *America*, that is, North America as far as the Isthmus of Darien. Of course I realized that at the time the Mexican boundary was a convenient division line, although merely an arbitrary one, because we fell over it into Lower California without much of any comment.

In looking over the zone map in the new Check-List, we cannot but see how vividly the whole question presents itself. It is only a question of another decade when the very nature of events will demand that our Check-List shall cover all of North America, and not merely a part of it. On the west, including Lower California as we do, we already parallel Mexico nearly half of its length. On the east Florida extends to about the 25th degree, and our country now has permanent possessions among the islands to the south. The Panama Canal Zone is permanently occupied and forms a natural boundary much more definitely than the Mexican line to the north. Ridgway, when he formulated plans for his great work, must have seen the handwriting on the wall, for he includes all this territory. As a forecast of what the future has in store, one has but to note the extensive work that is quietly going on to the south of us. The National Museum, through Nelson and others, has covered an immense section. The Field Museum, through Dearborn and Ferry, has invaded Costa Rica and many of the islands. The American Museum of Natural History is also in the field, as are an immense number of private collectors. Now our government has already taken steps to cover the Canal Zone completely; and this is only the start!

A decade or two ago the American Ornithologist's Union was a pretty small band, with a big proposition, spread out as far as the Pacific, before it. Instead of being satisfied with local growth, as many societies might have been, this same A. O. U. quickly grasped its opportunity and spread during this period until it is powerfully entrenched in every state of the Union. A more loyal group of ornithologists does not exist in the world! It makes one feel that this prompt response to conditions as they arise, will cause the men who have so safely guided the A. O. U. in the past to meet the conditions which are so rapidly shaping for a still further expansion when the next Check-List is published ten years hence. By that time most of the states will have published state lists each giving the status of every species within its boundaries; but a much more comprehensive understanding can be had of our migratory birds, if the territory of the

Check-List include everything north of the natural division at and including the Canal Zone.

What do C. O. C. members think of the proposition as a whole? You know the west has made the A. O. U. sit up and look, more than once. Why can't we start something going along these lines? Of course I haven't brought the facts together properly or fully; but merely touched here and there. I feel, however, that we are fast approaching a point where we can begin to agitate, and within a few years, at most, the whole thing will loom up as a necessity apparent to all.

FRANK S. DAGGETT
Chicago, January 5, 1911

PERSONAL, TO COOPER CLUB MEMBERS:

In accepting the responsibility imposed upon me by the favorable action of the Cooper Club in endorsing my proposal for a cooperative work upon *The Birds of California*, I do so in full confidence that the members of the Club will really cooperate. Indeed, our very name pledges us to *Cooperation*. While it is true that any leader receives a large amount (often an undue one) of credit for any successful enterprise, it is still more true that all who help have a right to say "*we did it.*" That is just what I should wish for "*The Birds of California.*"

If, then, you ask me how you may help, I say: First, by publishing in *THE CONDOR* those interesting notes you have meant all along to send in sometime. Practically every observer has or has had unique opportunities in the case of several species. Let us hear about these soon, so that the results may be available for assimilation in "*The Birds of California.*"

Then, too, being a bit of a stranger, and having to make the most of five all too brief seasons, I shall appreciate any personal guidance afield which you may care to offer. I shall be especially glad to hear of any unusual photographic opportunities, whether of nesting or flocking birds. Please be patient here. I cannot always rush across the state to photograph a single nest, even though it be a rare one. But if your opportunities "stack up" at a favorable time, or if you are able to mark down something good for another season, it would be a great courtesy to advise me.

Those of you who use the camera are sure to have some choice numbers which ought to appear in "*The Birds of California.*" Don't be bashful. It's your book. On the other hand, if someone else sends in something better for final selection, we know that you won't feel hurt that we cannot use all of your material. We shall all want our book to be the best possible, whoever gets credit for it.

Of course you will let me put the business side of the enterprise up to you at the earliest