

## PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

A REVISION OF THE SUBSPECIES OF THE GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens* [LINNAEUS]). By HARRY C. OBERHOLSER. [—Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., vol. 42, 1912, pp. 529-577.]

In this monograph the author concludes that a proper comprehension of the group in question calls for the recognition of no less than twelve new subspecies, which, with the six previously named forms also recognized in the paper, gives a total of eighteen geographic races of the Green Heron described and discussed.

The new varieties are all from the West Indies, Mexico, and Central America, and their recognition in nowise affects the present arrangement of the A. O. U. Check-List—doubtless to the relief of many. Our southwestern form, *Butorides virescens anthonyi*, is mentioned as one of the best characterized forms of the species; the geographic range ascribed to it is essentially the same as that outlined in the Check-List, though given, of course, in greater detail.

The recognition of such a number of slightly differentiated subspecies (there is one allotted to each of the larger Lesser Antilles south of Guadeloupe, with the exception of St. Vincent) is justified by the author in the following terms: "In the West Indies, either we must recognize a large number of additional forms or merge all. \* \* \* To adopt the latter alternative, however, would be to obscure all the evident and highly interesting, though to some extent puzzling, geographical variations which these West Indian birds exhibit. The writer has, therefore, adopted the former course, as better representing the facts. \* \* \* In one or two cases where forms are separated by a wide geographic area and by intervening races, it has been thought better to recognize by name slight average differences, rather than to refer such a bird to a distant and isolated race, to which, although superficially very similar, it could have no close phylogenetic relationship. This, of course, is the same problem that one meets often in wide-ranging and plastic groups, and which, it seems to the writer, would be in much the best way solved by assigning a name to the isolated colony, if there can be found any characters at all, however slight, to serve as a basis."

The argument is logical and convincing, but even those of us most inclined to admit it, will, I believe, be relieved that the various changes in the group under discussion come no nearer home! Here in the west we have our "colonies" of various species of birds, to which no one as yet has ventured to affix separate names; when they are migratory

forms the difficulty of treatment is much increased.

Mr. Oberholser's treatment of the Green Herons, from the amount of material handled, and the evident care with which the problems involved have been worked out, will probably remain authoritative for some time to come.—H. S. SWARTH.

A PARTIAL ACCOUNT OF THE BIRDS IN THE VICINITY OF LAGUNA BEACH. BY LEON GARDNER [First Annual Report of Laguna Marine Laboratory, 1912, pp. 187-194.]

A briefly annotated list of fifty-eight species observed during the summer near Laguna and Balboa, on the coast of Orange County, in southern California. The birds are for the most part those known to frequent the general region, but we may, perhaps, be allowed to question the inclusion in the list of both *Toxostoma r. redivivum* and *T. r. pasadenense* as well as *Catherpes mexicanus conspersus*. The use of the term "Brown Blackbird" in place of the familiar "Brewer Blackbird" does not seem a very happy innovation. The observation and accompanying collecting of the birds seems to have been done, judging from the annotations, largely for the study of their parasites.—H. S. SWARTH.

BIRDS OF THE PACIFIC SLOPE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, by GEORGE WILLETT. [—COOPER ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB, PACIFIC COAST AVIFAUNA No. 7, 1912, pp. 1-122.]

This publication was mailed to all members of the Cooper Ornithological Club, under date of July 25, 1912. One can only wonder at the efficient management of a club that permits it to send its members, in addition to THE CONDOR, such important publications as this, in return for the small membership fee.

It is needless to say that the appearance of this list has been watched for with more than usual interest by the active workers in the Club, as the work is, in its aim, a recapitulation of all that is known of one phase of the avifauna of southern California. Since 1898, Grinnell's "Birds of the Pacific Slope of Los Angeles County" has been the main reliance of bird students of southern California, and Mr. Willett states in his "Introduction" that it was the first idea of the Club merely to revise this list. The territory, however, was finally extended to include not only the Pacific slope of Los Angeles County, but that of all the rest of southern California, as well. This territory, roughly mapped, includes all that section south of the mountains dividing northern and southern California, and west of the ranges extending from the San Jacinto mountains to the Mexican line, cutting off the Colorado desert to the eastward. The list also includes all of the Santa