

# THE CONDOR

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## EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

Dr. Barton W. Evermann has been carrying on a study of the White Pelican colony at Pyramid Lake, Nevada, for the purpose of preparing a habitat group of the species to be installed in the Museum of the California Academy of Sciences. In a talk given by Dr. Evermann at a recent meeting of the Northern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club, he raised the question as to the desirability of continuing such absolute protection as the birds have received up to the present time. The several thousand Pelicans constituting the colony on Pyramid Lake, each eating several pounds of fish per day, consume in the course of a year a total that seems rather appalling in these days of food scarcity, certainly far more fish than are eaten by the entire human population of Nevada during the same period. It is true that the fish taken by the Pelicans (mostly suckers and chub, as but few trout are destroyed) are not at present utilized to any extent by the white population of Nevada. The Indians dry them in large quantities, and there is no apparent reason why these

fish should not be widely acceptable food, either fresh or canned. As pointed out by Dr. Evermann, there is possibility here for the establishment of an important industry, with the consequent utilization of a food product that is now being undeservedly neglected; and there is no reason why we should not insist upon the Pelicans at least sharing with us the monopoly they are now enjoying, even if it should prove necessary to reduce the Pelican population.

A seventh edition of Mrs. Bailey's "Handbook of Birds of the Western United States" (Houghton, Mifflin Company) has appeared, this one being an innovation in that it is greatly reduced in size through use of thin paper, cutting to narrower margins, and replacement of the board covers by limp leather. The result will prove particularly welcome to the field student who has need of reducing his luggage to a minimum of weight and bulk. We find the actual weight of our old copy of "Bailey" (second edition) to be 35 ounces, of the new edition to be just 19 ounces—a saving of one whole pound. In bulk the reduction we find to be just one-half. The size now permits of carrying the book loosely in an ordinary pocket. The new edition shows extended changes in the pages of "Addenda", but otherwise the text is the same as heretofore.

The Museum of Comparative Oology at Santa Barbara has recently secured an egg of the extinct "Roc", *Aepyornis maximus*, of Madagascar. This specimen, which measures twelve inches in length by nine in breadth, "as big as a watermelon", is without discoloration of any kind and is said to be one of the finest in existence. Its shell weighs three and three-quarters pounds avoirdupois; while the contents, to judge from the soft swish emitted upon rotation, have become reduced to a mere handful of dust. For the acquisition of this treasure the Museum is indebted to Dr. Frederick A. Lucas who gave information leading to its "discovery", in the hands of a Danish missionary, and to the donor, Miss Caroline Hazard, of Santa Barbara and Peace Dale.

We wish Mr. Oberholser would confine his announcements of innovations in nomenclature to avowedly technical articles instead of running them into all sorts of unexpected places, often in quite "popular" literature. In the Wilson Bulletin, no. 98, March, 1917, we encounter, without justification, "*Linaria cyanea*" (p. 29) for the Indigo Bunting, "*Hedymeles ludovicianus*" (p. 28) for the Rose-breasted Grosbeak, etc., effectually concealed in an article under the innocent title "A Cooperative Bird Census at Washington, D. C.!"

Mr. W. Leon Dawson is continuing his work on the text of his "Birds of Califor-

nia". Each year's field-work serves to add materially to the store of facts upon which he can draw, and the manuscript has now reached considerable proportions. In his field work the past season Mr. Dawson has been assisted by Mr. C. I. Clay.

At the behest of Mr. E. O. McCormick, vice-president of the Southern Pacific Railroad, Mr. H. S. Swarth, of the staff of the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology has recently been devoting his attention to the birds of the "Apache Trail", central Arizona. A trip was made through the region, and specimens were collected and notes gathered, to serve as a basis for a published account of the birds of that section. This will be non-technical in character, designed to stimulate interest in persons without special knowledge of the subject, as well as to draw the attention of the experienced bird student to the exceptionally interesting bird life of a unique corner of the United States.

Bird students in the San Francisco Bay region have recently interested themselves in the matter of the destruction of water birds by crude oil poured out of tank steamers plying to and from San Francisco. Reports of the destruction of large numbers of California Murres have been received from government employees stationed on the Farallon Islands, and other species are known to suffer in less degree from the same cause. The tank steamers come to the port with salt water as ballast in their oil tanks. As they approach the Golden Gate they pump out this water, and some residue oil is unavoidably carried with it. This oil floats back and forth on the surface of the water, and, getting on the feathers of the birds which alight to feed there, directly or indirectly causes their death. Committees from the Audubon Association of the Pacific and Cooper Ornithological Club are co-operating in an attempt to devise some means of securing alleviation of this menace to our coastal bird life.

In connection with the Enabling Act now pending in Congress, to give effect to the migratory bird treaty between the United States and Great Britain, we learn that at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Association of Game and Fish Commissioners, held at Washington, D. C., June 13, 1917, resolutions were passed recommending that this bill, as relating to the conservation of natural resources, be considered an important war measure, and urging its immediate passage. We are further informed that while there is good prospect of the passage of this bill, still there are difficulties to be met, especially in the House of Representatives, and it is urged that everyone use his influence with his Congressional representatives, to get un-

divided support for the measure.

Most of the bird migration along the Pacific coast lacks the impressive rush and wave-like movement that characterizes the migration in the eastern states, but that is no reason why the subject should be neglected here. Indeed, this is a good reason for paying particular attention to the arrival and departure of our migrant species in the spring and fall. The problems of migration are even more complex here than in the East and we therefore have need of much more data in attempting to explain our part of this ever-baffling mystery. All of our bird students, including both collectors and sight observers, should keep notebooks and record the first and bulk arrivals of all the species which occur in their localities, and also, what is much more difficult, the dates of their departure. It is only by combining many such sets of notes, gathered over a term of years, that we will be able to make any serious attempt toward the successful solution of the problem.

#### PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

BIRDS OF THE ISLANDS OFF THE COAST OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. By ALFRED BRAZIER HOWELL. —Pacific Coast Avifauna Number 12. Published by the Cooper Ornithological Club, June 30, 1917; pp. 1-127, 1 map.

A valuable addition to the Pacific Coast Avifauna series has appeared in Number 12, which will prove of interest and great utility to the student of insular bird life, as well as of much importance as a book of reference to general ornithologists. In this publication Mr. Howell shows not only that he is familiar with island conditions and characteristics, but that he has worked most persistently and diligently to gather together all available data and information concerning the avian population of these islands. The bibliography is as complete as would seem possible, and yet there is a full synonymy accompanying the account of each species. In fact the latter appears to be more complete than necessary, in connection with such a bibliography; but, as the author has been willing to perform such a laborious task, the student of the book will have good cause to congratulate himself upon being saved a lot of trouble.

Mr. Howell seems to have left no stone unturned within his reach that might have some fact or record hidden beneath it. There are probably other stones that have escaped his careful search, whose existence is known to none but the owners thereof, and which may cover valuable information. It will be a service to all students of insular