

EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

A petition lately circulated and now filed with the President of the American Ornithologists' Union consists of a remonstrance against the current tendency in some quarters toward the subdivision of avian genera to a point where but one species remains in a genus. A real danger threatens, in that by such minute divisions of the genus the usefulness of nomenclature will be greatly discounted. Let us remember that the function of classification is two-fold, to express the results of evolution and to provide a useable set of names. A great many generic changes, such as pervert these uses, have been proposed and are now awaiting action by the A. O. U. Committee on Nomenclature. It is urged that this body be judiciously conservative in the matter. The petition in question, the objects of which we heartily endorse, was launched by Mr. P. A. Taverner, and it has been signed by a large majority of the working ornithologists of the United States and Canada.

Mr. P. A. Taverner of the Victoria Memorial Museum, Ottawa, is at work on a book dealing with the birds of western Canada. This is being planned along similar lines to the same author's "Birds of Eastern Canada", which latter volume has met with a wide demand. The new work will be plentifully illustrated in color from drawings by Allan Brooks.

Major Allan Brooks, whose home is in Okanagan Landing, British Columbia, has come to California for a protracted stay. His headquarters are at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, whence he plans to fare forth now and then for periods of collecting and studying birds in different parts of the state. Mr. Brooks has several commissions to execute in the way of illustrating forthcoming works on birds and mammals, both in the East and in California.

The editors of the Cooper Club publications are accustomed to employ in THE CONDOR and in the Avifauna series only the scientific names which have already been adopted by the A. O. U. Committee on Nomenclature, save as explicitly requested by an author to do otherwise. Even then, we prefer not to depart from this standard authority unless the author *gives his reasons* for taking such exception as he may to the A. O. U. rulings.

We recently heard Dr. E. W. Nelson say

that, in 1921, about 1200 federal licenses were issued through the Biological Survey to kill birds in the United States for scientific purposes. Four hundred of the holders collected no birds at all; the remaining 800 license-holders collected 15,000 specimens, or less than 20 birds each. It is estimated that during the same period 3,000,000 game birds were killed by sportsmen. Thus one bird was killed to become a permanent, scientific specimen for every 200 birds that were killed for the ephemeral thrill of sport or for the nearly as fleeting purpose of gastronomic pleasure! And yet we have the spectacle of officials of many of the state game commissions solemnly withholding collecting permits, save in rare cases, on the grounds that bird-life must be conserved!

A popular natural history book of more than average merit is the one issued by Houghton Mifflin Company toward the end of 1922 and entitled "Denizens of the Desert". Its author is Mr. Edmund C. Jaeger, of Riverside, California, who shows himself to have the ability to perceive, and record in pleasing language, actual truths in nature. Chapters in the book deal at more or less length with a dozen or more of the common birds of the Colorado Desert, including Canyon Wren, Rock Wren, Leconte Thrasher, Roadrunner, Phainopepla, and Verdin. It is illustrated, the text being supplemented by some attractive pictures, from drawings by Carl Eytel, as well as by photographs. Our copy cost us three dollars at a local book shop.

The *Wilson Bulletin* for December, 1922, contains an article by Ira N. Gabrielson on the "Life Histories of Various Species of Birds" which well illustrates the point that there is no one, anywhere, who is lacking in plenty of opportunity to contribute valuably to avian natural history. The species dealt with by Mr. Gabrielson are all very common ones in the Mississippi Valley, but he brings forward a considerable mass of accurate observational data, some of it, to the best of our knowledge, new, and all of it well deserving publication because of its corroborative worth. Here in the West we often find that scarcely anything of definite value has been published about the behavior of even an abundant species. We cite the *Wilson Bulletin* article as a pattern of what can and ought to be accomplished along this line much more frequently than is the case, in the western states.