

The Pacific Harlequin Duck Breeding in Oregon.—Although the writer has noted this duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus pacificus*) as a fairly common fall, winter, and spring species (September 9 to May 18) along our seacoast for a number of years, no authentic inland records have been noted. Neither does the available literature at hand show that the species has ever been even suspected of breeding within the state of Oregon.

On July 21, 1925, on the west fork of the Willowa River in the Willowa National Forest near Frazier Lake, an adult female with her brood of downy young was encountered and watched for some time with considerable interest by the writer and Elmer Williams of Portland, Oregon. When discovered, both the parent bird and the young were feeding in an open stretch of swift, clear water; but soon they took refuge by swimming rapidly downstream where they attempted to conceal themselves in a tangle of brush and limbs of a large spruce tree that had fallen across the stream. While thus partly hidden, four young about a third grown, but still in the downy plumage, were distinctly seen. Others may have been hidden in the brush.

Thorough investigation along our alpine streams may prove the Pacific Harlequin Duck to be a tolerably common breeding species, since mountaineers have often told me of ducks seen along streams at high elevations, both in the Cascades and in the Blue Mountains.—STANLEY G. JEWETT, *Portland, Oregon, July 28, 1925.*

California Tufted Titmouse Feeds on Sunflower Seeds.—I have some very large Russian sunflowers, seven feet high, with a single head nearly a foot across. The other day a pair of the California Tufted Titmouse (*Baeolophus inornatus*) invaded the place and, sitting on the edges of the great heads, began taking off the florets and then pulling out the seeds, taking nearly all there were from four heads. This they did with great cleverness, crushing the seeds and eating the kernels just as the Russians do, throwing the shells on the ground, and leaving the seeds that contained no kernels. I did not know that this type of bird had such a habit, but since have learned of other birds, including other titmouses and nuthatches, feeding on sunflower seeds when obtainable.—DAVID STARR JORDAN, *Stanford University, California, August 17, 1925.*

EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

At Los Angeles, California, in the early spring of 1926, the Cooper Ornithological Club will hold its first formal annual meeting, devoted to the discussion of ornithological subjects. It is hoped that every member far and near will plan to be present. All are invited to contribute to the program. Plan your spring outing when Nature is at her best, with Los Angeles as the focal point. Detailed plans, with dates, will appear in the forthcoming January issue.

The well-known village of Sisson in Siskiyou County, California, is henceforth to be called Mount Shasta City. It seems that the name of a pioneer settler has no longer any romance about it; or rather, that an enterprising chamber of commerce has decided that Mount Shasta City will be more alluring to the tourist trade. This is bound to make trouble when it comes to the geography of plants and animals.

For back in the early days of California there existed a Shasta City, not in Siskiyou County as now restricted, but in Shasta County. Indeed, at one time Shasta City was the most important town of all northern California. Early naturalists visited the place and made collections there, so that "Shasta City" figures in our distributional literature. It is true that Shasta City is now practically deserted. But the new "Mount Shasta City", of location in an entirely different life-zone, will be bound to occasion confusion, even total misinferences, when collections of plants and animals so labeled begin to be distributed abroad. For naturalists at a distance cannot be expected to keep track of such shifts in place names. Geographical nomenclature *ought* to be held inviolable. A law of priority is needed in this regard, from a scientific standpoint, quite as much as in the naming of animals and plants.

The fallibility of human testimony is a factor that must be given due allowance in matters ornithological as well as in every other connection. We should seriously heed the statements recently made in this regard by a man who is a professional lawyer by training and practice and who comes from a long line of successful lawyers. Mr. S. Prentiss Baldwin says (*Bird-Lore*, July-August, 1925, p. 236): "I feel that a law training in evidence would be the best foundation for all scientists Each year of practice of ornithology brings me more to appreciate this lesson from my early practice of law, that I should not too quickly believe even that which I think I see and hear." In discussing the pros and cons of the House Wren controversy, Mr. Baldwin points out how easy it may be to come to erroneous conclusions on the basis of circumstantial evidence only. It is easy to observe partially or fleetingly and incorrectly, and then to make inferences which as a consequence are altogether inconsistent with the real facts.

The Illinois Audubon Society "Bulletin" (Summer, 1925) contains an "Appreciation" of Ruthven Deane, by Wilfred H. Osgood, that arouses our warmest admiration. The statement that "to ornithologists the country over, the one principal attraction of the great middle western metropolis has been Ruthven Deane" is a generous compliment, coming from the curator of the department of zoology of a great museum situated in that same city, but the truth thereof needs no support.

We are again under obligation to Mr. Frank N. Bassett for compiling the index for the present volume of *THE CONDOR*. The work involved in such an undertaking is understood and appreciated best by those who have done it themselves. The editors gratefully acknowledge their relief at this lessening of their labors.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

FIELD BOOK OF BIRDS OF THE SOUTHWESTERN UNITED STATES. By LUTHER E. WYMAN AND ELIZABETH BURNELL. Pp. XXIV + 308, 4 colored plates (frontispiece and 3 life-zone maps), many text figs. Houghton Mifflin Company. Price \$3.50. (Our copy received October 5, 1925.)

In their avowed purpose "to aid the beginner and to meet the needs of schools

and of the amateur bird student", the authors have produced a handbook for the ready identification of birds that is conceived along original lines and contains many excellent features. The territory covered includes all of Arizona, southern California, and the southern extremity of Nevada.

Introductory chapters include instruction in the use of the book, a discussion of life-zones with special reference to conditions in the southwest, a "glossary", and "explanatory notes". The nomenclature and the order of the A. O. U. *Check-list* are followed. Under each species there are statements (condensed to the utmost) of size, color and general appearance, a few words as to habits, and a paragraph dealing with manner of occurrence. This printed matter is supplemented by small black and white sketches of nearly all the species treated, and by small outline maps showing distribution. The bird drawings, though small, are excellent, and where they concern species showing definite and easily recognizable markings, should serve a useful purpose. Very sensibly, no attempt has been made thus to figure more than one of closely related subspecies.

The plan of the work is admirable, and it is well carried out. This is a handbook that can be cordially endorsed; it should be decidedly useful to the rapidly increasing army of bird students in the southwest. There are slips, of course, but mostly they are not of a nature to detract from the usefulness of the publication, considering the clientele for which it is intended. Then too, as far as critical comments are concerned, the really important criticisms of a book of this nature should be sought later from the people who have been using it. One thing, though, does seem worthy of remark, and that is the authors' apparent shakiness in their attitude toward subspecies, reflected in statements such as that comparing the Ant-eating Woodpecker with "its subspecies, the California Woodpecker"; and comparing the Black-fronted Warbler with "the Audubon, of which this is a subspecies". This idea, that one geographic race is a subspecies of another (that is, one subordinate to the other), is just the conception that modern ornithology is trying to break away from; it seems to be a difficult matter (made so largely by our system of nomenclature) to substitute the logical view that all subspecies of any one species are parts, coördinate so far as naming is concerned, of one widespread and inclusive kind of bird.—H. S. SWARTH.