

EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

The date for the next annual meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union has been set as October 12-14, and the meeting is to be held in Ottawa, Canada. We already know of five westerners who are definitely planning to attend this meeting, and there will doubtless be others. Anyone desiring further information concerning it should make enquiry of Mr. Hoyes Lloyd, who is Secretary of the Local Committee of the A. O. U., in charge of the Canadian meeting of 1926; address him care of Canadian National Parks, Department of the Interior, Ottawa, Canada.

We are pleased to announce that Mr. Harry Harris, until recently of Kansas City, has now become a permanent resident of California—a case of east-to-west migration, it will be observed. Mr. Harris has become associated with the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art, becoming Membership Secretary of the Museum Patrons Association. Incidentally, this gives full opportunity for Mr. Harris to give valuable service to the Cooper Club, in the Business Manager's office, along with Mr. W. Lee Chambers.

Word comes from Mr. Joseph Dixon that he has obtained a set of the eggs of the Surf-bird, up until now, so far as known, absolutely lacking in any oological collection of the world. Mr. Dixon is carrying on field work in the Mount McKinley district of Alaska, under the combined auspices of Mr. John E. Thayer and the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.

An increasing number of bird students are becoming interested in the formation of ornithological libraries. This means a rapidly advancing market value of nearly all books and serials relating to birds. Not many years ago a certain book that we are thinking of could be had for \$6.00; now there is a standing offer of \$25.00 for it. We would remind collectors of books that many of the publications coming from the press today will be the rarities of the future. The minor ornithological serials, most especially, are due to be "out of print" very shortly. Although such periodicals may be issued in considerable numbers of copies, most of these quickly disappear; few people save sets of the periodicals to which they subscribe. Such a series as "Yosemite Nature Notes", or "The Gull", is sure soon to possess high market value, that is, for a set kept intact.

Satisfactory progress is being made toward final publication of the Fourth Edi-

tion of the American Ornithologists' Union "Check-list of North American Birds." The A. O. U. Committee on Nomenclature is actively at work on this enterprise which, naturally, involves a much greater amount of labor than either of the preceding editions, since the first. The amount of literature that must be gone over in establishing the known ranges of the birds, down to date, is enormous. Then there is the matter of bringing the classification into accord with the latest findings of students of phylogeny. When the Fourth Edition appears, it is to be hoped that it will be adopted everywhere as the standard authority for the names of North American birds.

A CLOSE SEASON ON GOLDEN EAGLE EGGS.—The following letter from an officer of the State Fish and Game Commission was sent out, early in the season, to collectors in southern California, and in general was probably heeded, in the interest of future "crops" of eagle eggs if for no other reason.

"Conditions in San Diego County as regards the golden eagle deserve your consideration. Numerous sets have been taken through a term of years. Even though no diminution in numbers of the birds may be evident at present, yet with a long lived bird the real results of continuous removal of the eggs are likely to appear in the future, and suddenly. Furthermore, many nesting sites have been located, and rivalry among collectors has become so keen that the real purpose and justification of collecting is being overlooked. As a consequence it is planned, with your coöperation, to afford the golden eagles of this county complete protection for 1926. An attempt has been made to include the golden eagle among the exceptions on all San Diego County permits. If any collector did not find this exception noted on his permit, it was an oversight in this office."

COMMUNICATION

SAVING RARE PARROTS IN CAPTIVITY

To the EDITOR of THE CONDOR,

Sir:

As you are, I believe, aware, I am much interested in breeding rare parrakeets with the object of saving in captivity species that are threatened with extinction in a wild state. I have been trying to induce American aviculturalists to take up the experiment, and have received considerable assistance from Mr. Charles Metzger of 6312 S. Ashland Avenue, Chi-

ago. Mr. Metzger is unable to keep any rare parrakeets himself, but he has been most active in writing to possible helpers and in collecting information. Some of the facts that have come to light as a result of his enquiries are very interesting. In the first place the climate of California has been shown to be admirably suited to the success of the venture. Some of the more delicate species that are in urgent need of preservation have actually been bred in considerable numbers under conditions of aviary management I should consider far from ideal. Birds which, by reason of their quarrelsome disposition, I should never keep except in pairs, have been turned into an aviary with a number of their own kind and various other parrakeets and yet have reared numerous young.

We have also ascertained that there are already in the hands of certain Californian aviculturists stocks of Elegant (?) Grass Parrakeets (*Neophema elegans*), Bourke Parrakeets (*Euphema bourkii*) and perhaps Turquoise Parakeets (*Neophema pulchella*). All this is most encouraging, but there is another side to the picture. Few, if any, of the owners of these priceless avian treasures seem to have the least idea of their value. They just let them take their chances in a mixed collection, and sometimes clear them out to make room for the semi-domestic Budgerigar or for some other common species that happens to take their fancy. There seems to be a very general ignorance as to what parrakeets are really rare, that is, rare in a wild state, and as to what are a legitimate source of pride to the breeder. Mealy Rosellas (*Platycercus pallidiceps*), which exist in thousands in Australia, may be as much valued as the rarest grass parrakeets, simply because they happen to be temporarily scarce in the bird trade; while a person who has bred rare grass parrakeets will often mention the breeding of the common and hardy Indian Ringnecks as though that were an avicultural feat of equal interest and calling for equal skill!

I should like to urge upon American naturalists the importance of making the most of their opportunities before it is too late. They have, in California, the right climate and conditions; that is a fact already demonstrated. They have also, on the spot, stocks of at least two species which are in urgent need of preservation. It is not unlikely that there are, at the present time, more Bourke Parrakeets in California than there are wild in their native land, so exceedingly scarce has the species become in its natural state.

Surely it is worth while to get in touch at once with the owners of rare parrakeets, impress upon them the importance and value of their birds, and make arrangements to buy from them all surplus stock they are willing to part with for a systematic breeding experiment to be conducted under the best conditions.

Up to the present, Mr. Metzger and I have not had much support when it comes to the question of the actual provision of the right type of aviary, that is, a moveable one of sufficient size, that occupies a fresh site each year and normally contains one breeding pair only. People with the means to build aviaries lack the inclination to do so and others who would like to save the birds cannot afford to build and have not the ground available. As in this country, there seems to be a strong prejudice in favor of the old type of fixed aviary, which is considered quite good enough, and the suggestion that a moveable aviary is a necessity is regarded as rather fanciful. In the case of England I have proved beyond any possible doubt that, except for Budgerigars, which are almost unique in their ability to withstand the bad effects of stale ground, moveable aviaries are indispensable to the rearing of generation after generation of healthy parrakeets which do not deteriorate in stamina and fertility. I do not wish to be dogmatic about what is necessary in a climate as profoundly different as that of California, but it is at least possible that the evil effects of breeding in fixed aviaries may make themselves apparent in the long run, even though, for a few generations, no harm may seem to result. It is surely better to be on the safe side and start with an outfit which has been proved satisfactory, rather than leave anything to chance.

I might, perhaps, point out that any of the following are well worth breeding in view of their probable extinction in a wild state at no very distant date. The Fijian Masked Parrakeet (*Pyrrhulopsis personata*); any of the parrakeets of the genus *Cyanoramphus*, of which the New Zealand *C. novae-zealandiae* and *auriceps* are the best known; the Australian Pileated Parrakeet (*Porphyrocephalus spurium*); the Paradise Parrakeet (*Psephotus pulcherrimus*); the Australian Night Parrakeet (*Pezoporus wallivus*) if not, as is to be feared, already totally extinct; the Ground Parrakeet (*Geopsittacus occidentalis*); Bourke Parrakeet (*Euphema bourkii*); the Orange-bellied Grass Parrakeet (*Neophema chrysogastra*); the Elegant Grass Parrakeet (*Neophema ele-*

gans); the Rock Grass Parrakeet (*Neophema petrophila*); the Blue-winged Grass Parrakeet (*Neophema venusta*); the Turquoise Parrakeet (*Neophema pulchella*) and the Splendid Grass Parrakeet (*Neophema splendida*).

The first four Neophemae are easily confused by anyone not familiar with the genus, and to avoid the production of crossbred birds of no scientific interest the following distinctions should be borne in mind. The Orange-bellied is the greenest of the four; it has, as its name implies, a patch of orange on the belly, but this feature is frequently met with in brightly colored adult males of *elegans*, *venusta* and *petrophila*, so it is of no value for purposes of distinction. The most noteworthy point of difference is in the frontal band, which is of a not particularly intense blue and is wide and rather indefinite in shape, recalling a female Turquoise. The Elegant Grass Parrakeet has a narrow frontal band of intense blue; the wing shows a narrow strip of blue of two distinct shades, pale turquoise at the edge, dark farther in. This bird is commonly confused with the Blue-winged Grass Parrakeet, and many of the latter are sold as Elegants.

The Rock Grass Parrakeet is the most soberly colored of the genus. The prevailing color is a brownish olive green, and the blue areas on forehead and wing are smaller and less vivid than in the case of *N. elegans*.

The Blue-winged Grass Parrakeet is the only member of the genus that occurs in Tasmania (Gould appears to be in error in supposing that the Orange-bellied is found there) and it is the one which is most often caught and offered by bird dealers. It may readily be distinguished from the true Elegant by the fact that the blue wing patch is nearly twice the width and is *all of the same dark shade*.

In conclusion may I suggest that the preservation of a rare and beautiful bird is a matter of importance to *all* true ornithologists whose interest in bird life goes deeper than the mere study of museum skins. Many persons who live in the colder parts of the States, or who have no facilities for keeping live birds, might surely be willing to offer financial help. Unless they receive outside aid, Californian aviculturalists may not be able to do all that is needed to save the threatened species from final extinction.

Yours truly,

TAVISTOCK,

Warblington House, Havant, Hants, May 5, 1926.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

THE LONE SWALLOWS, By HENRY WILLIAMSON. E. P. Dutton & Co., 681 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y., 1926, 227 pp.

About a year ago Mr. Williamson published "Sun Brothers", a book exploiting all the romantic interest in nature, remaining at the same time intensely realistic. The present volume, "The Lone Swallows", is much in the same style and deals largely with the same *dramatis personae*, namely the falcons, the swallows, the wild flowers, and the people of southern England. The intermeshing of the threads of human, of animal, and of plant, destinies, is a favorite theme of the author, upon which he has made in the present instance a very readable book which should help in the struggle that seemingly must never cease if we are to preserve anything of natural beauty.

The ardency of a nature worshipper is evident throughout these chapters, and kindred spirits will thrill to many a telling phrase or convincing word picture in the book. In a few of the chapters the language is so loaded with metaphors that spontaneity is lost; but in general both writing and construction are good. Unusual words are fewer than in "Sun Brothers," and part of those employed are explained in the footnotes—an improvement. All in all, we like "The Lone Swallows" and wish its author continued power to write beautifully of Nature.—W. L. MCATEE, Washington, D. C., April 28, 1926.

TWO BOOKS FOR SERIOUS BIRD STUDENTS.—There come from England (H. F. & G. Witherby, London) two books, of scope and merit that lead us to recommend them to every serious student of bird life. One is Heilmann's "The Origin of Birds"; the other is A. Landsborough Thomson's "Problems of Bird-Migration". These two books possess certain qualities in common: each is the result of thorough-going, scholarly research; each gives a digest of the basic facts; each gives bibliographies of all the authoritative literature in the field of its subject matter; and each gives the final, down-to-date conclusions, theoretical and factual, in regard to the problems dealt with.

Gerhard Heilmann, a Dane, besides being a paleontologist of attainment, is an artist. In his book he depicts, in restoration, the remotest ancestors of the birds of today. We see *Archaeornis* and *Hesperornis* clothed with feathers, each amid its natural surroundings; we are given