

By official action, the institution in Ottawa, Canada, long known as the Museum of the Geological Survey of Canada, or simply as "Victoria Memorial Museum", is now to be designated as the Canadian National Museum. This change, certainly for the better, indicates the true nature of the institution in question; for it constitutes a worthy parallel in function and importance to our own United States National Museum.

Our faith in the dependability of the *Literary Digest* has been severely shaken as a result of reading in its issue of August 7, 1926, an account of the California Condor. We had always supposed that this representative magazine took pains to make sure of the authenticity of the informational material presented in its various departments. But here we seem to have a hodgepodge of guess, near-fact and outright misstatement, in regard to a subject we do happen to know a little about. Here are some examples: The California Condor is "probably the largest flying bird in the world." The wing spread is nine "to twelve feet." It is "a direct descendant of the prehistoric super-condor, *Teratornis merriami*". "Once paired," it "remains mated for life". "If one of a pair dies, it is believed that the remaining bird never takes another mate." "Condors are believed to live to the age of 100 years." "According to stories told by early residents of California, the Condor was monarch of the air, easily able to whip a golden, or even a bald, eagle." "Extinction of the California condor . . . is due largely to the desire of the miners in the days of the gold rush . . . for the large and hollow quills in which to carry gold dust."

The above statements are cited, without any cautionary comment, from clearly uncritical sources. What do readers of *The Condor* think of them? While the article in question contains a plea for the protection of the California Condor, it is headed with the insidiously suggestive caption, "A Bird that Lays \$1,500 Eggs". But, naively, we are told that "collectors for museums nearly completed the job of extermination before the State of California took a hand and protected the birds and their eggs with heavy penalties."

Seriously, there is a worthy piece of work pressing for attention before it is too late, namely, the writing of a true and exhaustive natural history of the California Condor.

## PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS OF AUSTRALIA. —With our own Check-list of North American Birds in course of preparation, this newly published Checklist of the birds of Australia\* will naturally be scrutinized eagerly by American ornithologists. The scope of the two works is essentially the same, to the extent that each aims to give a reliable list of the birds of a given area, but manner of treatment differs rather widely.

The Australian Checklist gives the following information: (1) The consecutive number of the species. (2) The accepted generic name (with the subgeneric name in parentheses). (3) The specific name. (4) The vernacular name. (5) The consecutive numbers of the species in the first edition of the Official Checklist, in parentheses. (6) The number of the colored plate in Gould's *Birds of Australia*. (7) The species number in Gould's *Handbook to the Birds of Australia*. (8) The number of the plate in Mathews' *Birds of Australia*. (9) The range of each bird in Australia and beyond, in abbreviated form. (10) The original reference of the accepted specific name. (11) The various names used in Australian works, given in chronological order.

As regards the last (11), "no opinion whatever is expressed as to the validity or otherwise of the many subspecific names proposed", but we wish there had been. Undoubted synonyms are mixed with the names of races whose authenticity is equally undoubted, to the everlasting bewilderment of a reader who, like the reviewer, has but a casual knowledge of the region covered.

As is pointed out in the introduction, every item is condensed to the utmost. With abbreviations for nearly every term used, general, bibliographical, or geographical, with small-sized type and close-set lines, a great mass of information is condensed within a very few pages. As compared with our own Check-list (1910 edition), of about the same sized page, our volume treats of 768 species in 374 pages, the Australian list, of 707 species in 115 pages. The extremely condensed

\* The official checklist of the birds of Australia. Compiled by a Committee of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union. Second and revised edition with appendix: scientific names—notes and pronunciation. By H. Wostenholme, B. A., M. B. O. U., R. A. O. U. Wahroonga, Sydney. Published by the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union, 1926. 212 pages, 1 plate (map). (Copies available from the R. A. O. U. at 12 s. 6d.)

form here adopted is confusing to one used to more extended treatment of such subject matter, and it certainly would not be a popular innovation in the American volume. Then, too, in our own case, we have considered "range" (that is, the distribution of species and subspecies) as a matter of prime importance, to be stated with as much attention to detail as our knowledge permits. Here, it is given in the most general manner imaginable, much as though we were to describe subspecies as occurring in the "New England States", or in the "Northwest".

However, these details of treatment aside, there can be no question as to the authoritativeness of this Checklist, considering the personnel of the committee that had it in hand. The following principles that are followed, as brought out in the introductory "report of committee", will commend themselves to a good many, at least, of the ornithologists of this country, as they do to the reviewer. "(1) 'The same name for the same bird' as on British and American lists. Thus Australians took their place alongside the ornithologists of Britain and America, and accepted to the full the principles of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature and the decisions of the International Commission of Zoological Nomenclature; (2) 'large genera' as used by some British Ornithologists and advocated in America; (3) that where a series of races or forms connected up certain forms with others, the whole should constitute one species."

Certain compromises were effected with Mr. Gregory M. Mathews regarding nomenclatural usage, with, in particular, the happy result that Mr. Mathews consented "to accept large genera if the numerous generic names as used in his later lists were included as subgenera." It is fortunate that these compromises should have been arrived at, with the result that the Checklist may be generally adopted and used.

The several appendices (pp. 116-142), covering the derivation, meaning, and pronunciation of the accepted scientific names of Australian birds, constitute a feature of the volume that will be useful to bird students in all parts of the world. Incidentally, many of Mr. Wostenholme's comments upon names shed side-lights upon personal or national historical events that form most enthralling reading, and this on pages that to the casual glance appear to be about as dry as those of a telephone directory.

The reviewer has no knowledge of Australian birds, and can form no opinion regarding the treatment of any particular species or subspecies, but the course that has been followed by the committee in charge of the compilation of the Checklist, and the appearance of the volume throughout, carry the conviction of an excellent piece of work accomplished. The Australian Committee would appear to have done its share toward the accomplishment spoken of in the closing paragraph of its introductory report, where the hope is expressed "that this second edition of the Official Checklist . . . will prove that a considerable step has been taken towards the long-proposed authoritative official list of the Birds of the World—the *Systema Avium*—the aspiration of every student and bird-lover."—HARRY S. SWARTH, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, September 30, 1926.*

#### MINUTES OF COOPER CLUB MEETINGS

##### NORTHERN DIVISION

DECEMBER.—The December meeting of the Cooper Ornithological Club, Northern Division, was held at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, on December 16, 1926, at 8:00 P. M. In the absence of President Allen, and at the request of Vice-president Carriger, Mr. C. B. Las-treto occupied the chair, with about sixty-five members and guests in attendance. Minutes of the Northern Division for November were read. The name of Miss Anne R. Richardson, Berkeley Inn, Berkeley, California, was presented for membership by Mr. Daniel Rowen.

The following resolution was presented by Mr. Grinnell and unanimously adopted by the Division:

WHEREAS, in the death of Dr. Frank H. Knowlton on November 22, 1926, the Cooper Ornithological Club lost a loyal member of sixteen years standing, and one, furthermore, who has contributed to the general knowledge of birds worthily, on a basis of scholarly research, be it

RESOLVED that the Northern Division of our Club hereby place on record this statement of our high esteem of Dr. Knowlton as a man, and of his ornithological work; and be it further

RESOLVED that the Secretary transmit to his widow a copy of these resolutions.

(Signed) Joseph Grinnell, Ralph W. Chaney, E. Raymond Hall.

Nominations of officers being a function of the December meeting, Mr. Carriger presented the following slate: President, Mr. Tracy I. Storer; Vice-president, Mr. Joseph Mailliard; Secretary, Mrs. Joseph Grinnell. Nominations were then closed.