

air, and sometimes to retain it in the claws until the nest mound was reached when it was transferred to the beak before it was given to the young. These young did not seem so eager for the food, probably because in this case two adults provided for four young, instead of one adult providing for six young; but they were ever on the alert and would show by their actions that they could distinguish between the flights after prey and the occasional shifting of the adults from one vantage point to another. These adults sometimes captured prey on the ground as well as in the air. As the young grew older and learned to fly they sometimes flew toward and intercepted the adult before the burrow was reached; this was successful only in cases where the adult flew close to the ground after making a low, or a ground, capture. The adults sometimes ate the prey themselves, and in this case it was sometimes held up to the beak with one foot while the bird stood on its perch.

On one occasion a weasel appeared, crossing the pasture, and was immediately assaulted by the owls. The young were flying quite well at this time and they joined in the attack, hovering over the scurrying weasel and swooping at it from behind with extended claws. The weasel paused and faced them at times and then hurried on; I could not be sure that they actually struck him, but they came close enough to do so. Birds from other families joined the fun, and at one time there were ten owls in the air together. The weasel was escorted about one hundred yards before the chase was abandoned.

Even with the aid of 8-power binoculars I was unable to determine the nature of the winged prey, except that it consisted of insects of some kind. Examination of pellets from the burrow and various lookout stations showed them to be composed of the bones and fur of small mammals, legs and wing cases of several kinds of beetles, mandibles of Jerusalem crickets, and more or less sand and vegetable fibers; and of this assortment, the beetles seemed the only ones likely to be captured in the air. The remains of several crayfish were also found in the vicinity.—JOHN MCB. ROBERTSON, Buena Park, California, December 2, 1928.

EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

FOURTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COOPER ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB.—The widespread personal satisfaction and the stimulus to the cause that have resulted from the past three Annual Meetings of the Cooper Club have lead to the decision to hold a fourth meeting the coming spring. Informal conferences among certain members have resulted in the decision by Loye Miller, President of the Board of Governors, to hold this year's meeting in the San Francisco Bay region, on the dates May 17 to 19. The present notice may, therefore, be considered as a preliminary announcement, and further notices with respect to exact places for the meetings and nature of the program will be sent out in due time, through THE CONDOR or otherwise. President Miller has appointed the following committeemen, under the general chairmanship of Tracy I. Storer: program, H. S. Swarth; finance, J. Grinnell; hospitality, C. B. Las-

treto; halls, cinema facilities, etc., Alden Miller; printing and publicity, T. I. Storer. There are planned, in addition to the scientific programs, a dinner for Club members and their guests, local field trips and, probably, an exhibition of ornithological pictures. Call is now made upon each member of the Club, wheresoever located, to plan to attend in person, and to submit to Mr. Swarth title of such contribution to the program as he will find himself ready to present. It is none too early to begin arrangements for the occasion.

A retired business man, Mr. William H. Hoffstot, 14 East 55th Street Terrace, Kansas City, Missouri, has adopted as his hobby furtherance of popular activity in attracting wild birds. He has compiled, at his own expense, an explicit set of directions as to "How to Build a Bluebird House." Anyone applying to him, send-

ing a self-addressed, stamped envelope, will receive a copy of these instructions gratis.

A Cooper Club member of long standing, Edward Bruce Richards, died at Grass Valley, California, September 30, 1928. He was a mining man, born in Nevada City, May 21, 1872. Since retiring from active business, he had spent more and more of his time in the pursuit of bird study, and in so doing had gathered together a considerable collection of birds. Based on these, and upon his extensive local field experience, Richards published in *THE CONDOR*, xxvi, 1924, pp. 98-104, "A List of the Land Birds of the Grass Valley District, California", enumerating 114 species and subspecies. Shortly before his death, Mr. Richards presented his collection of Nevada County birds to the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California.

A book we have just read, of high literary as well as considerable natural history merit, is John C. Phillips's "A Sportsman's Scrapbook" (Houghton Mifflin, 1928). The illustrations, too, are excellent, the originals (by A. L. Ripley) nearly all of them done in what appears to have been lithographer's pencil, the half-tone results being soft and more like lithographs than reproductions from the usual types of drawings. Doctor Phillips inducts his reader skillfully into full sympathy with his own high type of sportsman's point of view, which lacks much of the prejudice and taboo characterizing the ordinary run of "fish and game" sportsmen. Geese, ducks and grouse, and trout, are dealt with in a pleasing, personal-remembrance style.—J. G.

The Marquis of Tavistock, in a communication to the *Ibis* for October, 1928 (pp. 817-818), sounds a warning that deserves to be repeated and emphasized. Speaking of plumage variability in broods of Pennant Parakeets that were raised in his aviaries, and in one brood in particular, his concluding statement is as follows: "Those Australian field naturalists who labour under the delusion that the *Platycerci* do not attain adult plumage with the first complete moult would probably, if shown the skins of my family of *P. elegans*, assign a different age, and possibly a different year, to each of them." Ornithological literature is full

of descriptions of plumage stages of the sort he justly criticizes based not upon observed differences in birds of known age, but purely upon the assumption that certain plumages are representative of certain ages, the very plumage thus described being then adduced as proof of the assumption. The fallibility of the latter method has been demonstrated several times, as in these parrots, and, from wild birds, in the Bohemian Waxwing. In dealing with captive birds, suggestive as observed variations may be, there is always the chance that behavior is not just the same as it would be in the wild, and this criticism would not arise in studies based upon banded birds. Here is a field in which bird banders can do good service by having the scope of their observations include more than manner of occurrence of some species at least, of the birds passing through their hands. Colonies of gulls, for example, thus studied might yield some valuable results.—H. S. SWARTH.

A PRIZE IN WESTERN ORNITHOLOGY

The Editors of *THE CONDOR* announce the Mailliard Prize of One Hundred Dollars, to be awarded in January, 1930, for the most worthy contribution to western ornithology to be submitted within the year 1929. Award of this honor will be subject to the following conditions.

The contribution is to consist of a written report (of not less than 1500 words), in language that is explicit but not necessarily technical, upon some phase of bird study carried on in western North America. Manuscript should be in the office of *THE CONDOR* not later than December 1, 1929, and it should be in a form suitable for publication in this magazine. Judgment will be rendered on the basis of originality in choice and treatment of the subject, thoroughness, accuracy of detail as it reflects accurate observation, and the significance of the results for general natural history.

Competition for this award is open to any student of ornithology in North America west of the Mississippi, whose membership in the Cooper Ornithological Club has begun not later than December 1, 1929; but excepting faculty members and students in the University of California, and members of the staffs of other institutions where ornithological work is already a prominent feature. It is the intention of the donor of this Prize, Mr.