

## EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

In the Secretary's report of the 1930 Cooper Club annual meeting, he omitted to mention the exhibits of ornithological materials which were displayed in the Los Angeles Museum especially for Club members and visitors to see. These included a series of line and colored illustrations by John L. Ridgway, a series of special mounts of feathers by tracts, as used in molt studies, by J. Eugene Law, a large series of eggs of the California Murre exhibiting color variations, by George Willett, and a series of fossil bird bones from Conkling Cavern, New Mexico, illustrating the paper given by Mrs. Hildegarde Howard Wylde.—T.I.S.

The third 10-year index to the *CONDOR* is now in the hands of the printer. The manuscript for this, over 400 pages of it, has been prepared with painstaking care by George Willett, a contribution of service on his part which all serious workers in our field will gratefully acknowledge. We can point with some pride to the large store of creditable ornithology which has been given permanent record in the last ten volumes of our magazine. But a further duty is to make the detailed information contained in these volumes easily accessible to the serious student of the future. The performance of this duty will now soon be completed.

### PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

**REALITIES OF BIRD LIFE.** By EDMUND SELOUS. With an Introduction by Julian S. Huxley, M. A. London, Constable and Co. Limited, 1927. Demy-octavo (140 x 220 mm.), XVI + 342 pp.

It is so long since such a book has appeared that we of the present generation must cast about for adequate critical criteria. The book is intimate and dramatic. We feel the nipping and the eager air of the north before dawn, on the cliffs above some gray Hebridean flow, or on the windy flats of the Dutch coast. We watch, insatiably, equipped only with glasses and the genius to neglect nothing, to take nothing for granted, to comfortably pigeon-hole nothing in the easy repository of another man's doctrine.

There is no smell of powder, no hint of bird-skins, museum trays, or taxonomies,—nay, not even of scales, stop-watches, clinical thermometers, colored

bands, or long-focus cameras. Yet the mass of solid material is so great as to inspire as finished a technician as Julian Huxley, who writes the introduction, both to quick enthusiasm and careful criticism.

The volume has unity rather as a study of the mind of a brilliant ornithologist than as an attack upon any given problem. Scattered, diary-like records of the behavior of birds, most frequently of the breeding behavior of the birds of the shore and the sea, are not planned for the convenience of the slit-eyed specialist. Having thrown the usual defensive sop to Cerberus in the form of disclaimers of "literary" intent ("for 'you cannot serve God and mammon,' or say here 'gammon'"), Selous proceeds to cram his three hundred pages almost as tightly with ironic wit, philosophic and aesthetic by-play, and an overload of polyglot literary echoes, as with solid ornithology.

To have obviously gone so far, both in field and study, yet to write a volume which does not contain one stale pseudo-scientific "tag" is a mighty assertion of individuality. To have so exposed one's thoughts yet to remain a man without a doctrine indicates not so much the sceptic as the hardened cynic. If the British School, as shown by men like Howard, Nicholson, Selous and Huxley, are leading the world in the re-discovery of field ornithology, they are not doing so as a conscious unit. Selous, for instance, has no love for "territorialism". "The fact is, a bird cannot possibly be nowhere, and so is forced into having a territory." ". . . It might fly into a certain wood, field, island, etc., with a distinct idea of appropriating it, *first* [i. e., before localized sex and food associations were formed], which, for my part, I doubt if it ever does."

Perhaps if one aspect of bird life has stronger fascination for Selous it is what he has once called "psychology in transition",—the transitory confusion of behavior which passes from its origin into a complexity of new adaptations and collateral values, as the singing exhibitions of the oyster-catchers, which seem, from a functional, sexual, origin, to have become an end in themselves.

If the volume deals largely with instinct, it is hardly mechanized, and never freed from a haunting suggestion of something higher. A pervading ironic sense of a sort of reversed anthropomorphism

is often illuminating and never harmful. For instance, of the fighting of mated avocets,—“Strange *matrimonia jurga* these! They should be bitterly denied, because so human, by those ‘on the side of the angels.’”

The splendid book-making of Constable's and the high literary standard are rarely marred. All the more shocking is such a break as “jesture” on page 29.—T. T. MCCABE, *Berkeley, April 29, 1930.*

MINUTES OF COOPER CLUB  
 MEETINGS

NORTHERN DIVISION

MARCH.—The March meeting of the Northern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was held on Thursday evening, March 27, 1930, at 8:00 p. m., in Room 2003, Life Sciences Building, University of California, with about seventy-five members and guests present and President Storer in the chair. Minutes of the February meetings of both divisions were read. William Schwarting, 681 Spruce Street, Oakland, California, was proposed for membership in the Club by Brighton C. Cain.

Dr. Storer welcomed members to the new meeting place in the Life Sciences Building and recalled that the first meeting of the Northern Division to be held on the University Campus was in July, 1909, in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.

Mr. Swarth announced that he had received a letter from Mr. W. Otto Emerson of Hayward suggesting that the 100th anniversary of the birth, June 19, 1830, of J. G. Cooper might be observed appropriately by placing in the Hayward Public Library, erected on the site of Dr. Cooper's old home, a tablet to his memory. Dr. Theodore S. Palmer had also written him, he said, urging that this be done. Dr. Evermann commented favorably upon the plan and said that in company with Mr. Mailliard and Mr. Swarth he had visited the library and found the trustees agreeable to such a course. Dr. Bryant moved that the Chair appoint a committee of arrangements. The motion was duly seconded and unanimously carried. Dr. Storer announced the appointment of Mr. Emerson, Dr. Bryant and Miss Pringle.

Attention of members was called to the bulletin by Davis Quinn entitled “Framing the Birds of Prey”. Mr. Grinnell

stated that he had several copies of this forceful and largely truthful arraignment and would be glad to give them to interested members who might wish to aid in giving publicity to its contents.

The acorn-storing propensities of the California Woodpecker were discussed by Dr. Ritter, Dr. Storer and Mr. Mailliard. The last-named told of seeing a building at Rancho Chowchilla where great quantities of acorns had been stored, and where bees, taking advantage of the holes made by the birds, had stored honey in like proportions. Dr. Storer told of a similar occurrence at the little Catholic Church near Jackson and Dr. Ritter spoke of the activities of the birds at the Mount Diablo Country Club.

The recent slow but steady increase of American Egrets in the State was commented on by Dr. Cook, Dr. Storer and Mr. Streater. Leslie Hawkins reported the arrival of several birds, including two Dowitchers seen near the Key Route mole on March 23. Mr. Cain noted Cliff Swallows in Oakland on March 26. Miss Rinehart saw hundreds of Band-tailed Pigeons on the shoulder of Mt. Hamilton on the 23rd, and Dr. Bryant reported these birds to be damaging the vineyards of the Earl Fruit Company near Bakersfield, by breaking off sprouts when alighting on the vines in search of raisins.

The evening's talk was by Mr. Stanley E. Piper, Associate Biologist, U. S. Bureau of Biological Survey, who spoke upon “The Problem of Damage to Agriculture in California by Birds”. Mr. Piper dealt in a thorough way with this serious problem and showed many slides illustrating the damage done to lima bean plants by horned larks along the coast and to pear and almond blossoms in the interior by sparrows and finches. The damage done to ripening fruits in California, Mr. Piper pointed out, is much greater than in the eastern states where birds do not find it necessary to puncture fruits to slake thirst, as in our arid climate.

Adjourned.—HILDA W. GRINNELL, *Secretary.*

SOUTHERN DIVISION

MARCH.—The March meeting of the Southern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was held on Tuesday evening, March 25, 1930, at the Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, with about twenty-five members and friends present and President Willett in the chair.