

creasing in numbers; some species face extinction." "Small birds receive almost universal protection; large birds, and especially hawks, are killed on sight by almost everyone who carries a gun." "Mr. Miner's estimate of relative abundance of hawks and small birds obviously wrong." "Our point of view affects the value we place on birds; personal opinions cannot rule." "It is illogical to accuse a hawk of cruelty because it gets its living as nature intended it to get it." These views, it appears to us, are sound. If any Condor reader wishes further information as to the situation in Ontario, he should communicate with the Brodie Club, whose secretary is Mr. R. J. Rutter, 20 The Maples, Bain Avenue, Toronto, Canada.—J.M.L.

Nearly one hundred years ago, discussions were going on, of astonishingly similar character to those taking place right now concerning the use of vernacular names of birds. Let Dr. Stone (see January *Auk*, p. 143) and all the rest of us, present-day debaters on this subject read the following and be chastened! William MacGillivray wrote in 1837: "As to English names, very little needs be said, further than that, were the genera positively fixed, which they cannot be for many years, if ever, it might be well to give them vernacular names, in which case each species ought in like manner to have a distinctive epithet or substantive name. Thus, we shall suppose a genus named *Corvus*, to consist of five species named *Corax*, *Corone*, *Cornix*, *Frugilegus*, *Monedula*. The English generic name being *Crow*, we might name the species *Raven Crow*, *Carrion Crow*, *Hooded Crow*, *Rook Crow*, *Daw Crow*. But in all cases single substantive specific names would be the best: for example, the *Raven*, the *Corby*, the *Hoody*, the *Rook*, the *Daw*. Some person proposes a general meeting of British Ornithologists at London, York, or Edinburgh, for the purpose of determining the English nomenclature of our native birds; but such a meeting, were it to take place, would disperse without accomplishing the object in view, unless indeed its members were placed on the *Bass Rock*, and interdicted fire and food until they had settled all their differences, and sworn perpetual friendship. Even then, some malicious Celt, capable of subsisting a month on dulse and tangles, with an occasional raw limpet or mussel, might hold out until, rather than be starved, the

philosophers should leave the birds to him to do with them as he pleased. In sober earnest, it is impossible to remedy the acknowledged defects in nomenclature, so as to render it universally acceptable. Some persons who do their best to render the subject still more intricate, are extremely sensitive on the point of uniformity; but, in my opinion, however much they who are ambitious of being legislators in this matter may desire conformity to their views, there will always be more to spurn the yoke than to yield to authority, which is gradually falling to its proper standard. In fact, no two ornithologists have ever used the same names for five hundred birds; nor could two be found who should employ the same nomenclature in describing even the birds of Britain. There is really no cause of regret in all this: were there no differences in politics, religion, and science, the world would probably be much worse than it is. I am therefore under the necessity of using my own discretion in bestowing English, Gaelic, and Latin names on the birds which I propose to describe; and I request that my readers scruple not to reject whatever they find indicative of bad taste or bad feeling" (MacGillivray, *History of British Birds*, 1, 1837, pp. 9-10).

WHOLESALE POISONING OF WILD ANIMAL LIFE.—It is with a peculiar feeling of despair that we read the statement of findings summarized by Dr. Linsdale in his article published in the present issue of *The Condor*. His findings show that over one-third the area of California is being subjected to repeated applications of a poison, to kill ground squirrels, so insidious and far-reaching in its effects as to threaten the existence within that whole area of important native birds such as mourning doves and valley quail, as well as, secondarily but even more certainly, of carnivorous birds and mammals generally. And this has been going on, under State and Federal authorization or recommendation, despite our frequent solicitous enquiries of those agencies as to the harm suspected, until a stage has been reached when the malignant situation must be made known to the public through private initiative, in the hope that the practises will be discontinued.

There is a certain administrative type of mind to which the human "use" of all natural resources and the correlated elimi-

nation of anything which looks to be detrimental, or even not immediately and clearly of value, loom as the only "practical" aims. Dr. Linsdale refrains from giving much in the way of conclusions in his paper, leaving it for each of his readers to make interpretations suitable to his own understanding. However, we feel so apprehensive on the subject that we yield to the temptation to comment on our own part on some of the more obvious implications.

The total area poisoned in the year ending June 30, 1929, was over 5,000,000 acres (10th Annual Rept., Calif. Dept. Agric., December, 1929 [issued in 1931], p. 792); 558,000 pounds of grain poisoned with thallium were scattered. In one year, 1928, over *two million* pounds of poisoned grain were used. The behavior of thallium-poisoned animals is such that few dead animals come to the attention of the human observer, perhaps much less than one per cent. But even so, 116 witnesses report over 5000 dead animals identified and counted on less than one per cent of the total area poisoned. We can figure from this that in the last four years not less than 50 *million* animals *other than* ground squirrels have been killed in California through these operations! As to the money cost of such poison campaigns, \$812,478 were spent in California in the year 1930 for rodent control alone.

Now all this destruction of our higher vertebrate animals is done in the interests of but a part of the human population. Indeed, close analysis of the many angles in the problem leads to the query whether this expenditure has not been a total waste economically,—not only that but has involved a positive loss besides!

The pity of it is that these campaigns of destruction are carried on "in cooperation with" the Biological Survey, a governmental organization which we were brought up to believe, upon the best of grounds, was consecrated to the practice and encouragement of real conservation, and nothing else. While much of the work of this Bureau remains truly conservation in character and is thus to be highly commended, there has crept in of late years this insidious tendency toward a "practical" type of "conservation", which means saving profits for those groups of persons whose financial interests can be benefited by "control" (that is, extermination) of wild animal life.

It is a curious perversion, surely, when "conservation" is appealed to to justify *destruction*.

In our mind, at the present moment, the wholesale poisoning of wild animal life (birds, carnivorous mammals, rodents) on uncultivated terrain, ought to cease; not only that, but it should be prohibited by law. The first step to be sought is the stoppage of the use of thallium; and what is needed here is to reach those governmental authorities who are willing to heed facts and to act in the interests of people at large, not in the interests only of small though potent minorities. Read Dr. Linsdale's report; then if your conscience directs, exert your personal influence toward stopping this destruction of our wild animal life.—J. GRINNELL.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

BANNERMAN'S BIRDS OF TROPICAL WEST AFRICA.*—We have picked this book for review because, first of all, the preliminary glance we gave it aroused our interest and second because we had already from time to time wanted to know about the birds of West Africa and here was a chance to gain ideas from a recognizedly authoritative source. From the latter point of view, therefore, what does the work in question offer as meeting the enquiry of a student already equipped with a knowledge in general ornithological science but who lacks entirely any first-hand knowledge of Old-World birds and who even has read but little concerning the bird life of West Africa?

Such a student will ask first for concise information concerning the general distribution of the bird life of the entire territory and then for the descriptions of the critical conditions which control the existence of species in different parts of the territory. These questions are answered in satisfying measure by Bannerman's chapter on "the relationship of the vegetation belts to the distribution of bird life in Tropical Africa." This chapter is illustrated by finely reproduced

*The | Birds of Tropical West Africa | with
Special Reference to those of the Gambia, | Sierra
Leone, the Gold Coast and Nigeria | By | David
Armitage Bannerman | [etc., 8 lines] | Volume
One | Published under the Authority of the |
Secretary of State for the Colonies by | The
Crown Agents for the Colonies | 4 Millbank, West-
minster, London, S.W.1 | 1930 [our copy re-
ceived June 26]. Crown 4to, pp. lxxvi + 376,
10 pls., 119 text-figs. Price 22s 6d for this vol.;
of the entire 5, as issued, plus postage, £5, 7s, 6d.