

EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

The Sixth Annual Meeting of the Cooper Ornithological Club, held in Berkeley, May 15 to 17, 1931, was the most successful meeting in point of large attendance and of wide variety of features on its program, in the history of the Club. Those members not fortunate in having attended will find a full account of the meetings on pages 177 to 180 of this issue of the *Condor*, as provided by Governors' Secretary Storer.

We have now and then heard lament that more illustrations do not appear in the *Condor*. Aside from the ever-present pressure for economy (we cannot incur expense in excess of our income, every bit of which is used, as it is, for actual publication costs), the *Condor* is edited under a policy which discourages acceptance of pictures of birds merely because they are good photographs. Our policy, rather, just as with articles, is to use only such as really add to what has already been published in readily accessible books or ornithological journals. We aim not to duplicate subjects which have already been well illustrated in the thirty volumes of the *Condor* or in other magazines such as the *Auk*. What we do want, and hereby invite, are pictures showing new facts in bird behavior or in life histories. Pictures with real meaning, this fully pointed out in the legend as provided by the author of the accompanying article, are needed and will be welcomed.

As an example of what can be done for bird and mammal protection locally by one person, we cite the case of Amador County, California. In that County there has been in effect an ordinance of short-sighted effect, providing "payment of bounties on bluejays, magpies, hawks, foxes, wildcats and coons." Now, as of July 1, 1931, by unanimous vote of the County Supervisors, this ordinance is repealed. And the man who brought together and forcefully presented the facts that convinced those Supervisors of the wise course that they have now taken, was our fellow C. O. C. member, Mr. Henry Warrington, of Jackson. Congratulations to you, Mr. Warrington!

On June 13, 1931, Governor Rolph signed the bill making the "California Valley

Quail" the "avifaunal emblem" of California, in other words, our State Bird. If we are not mistaken, the idea which has now lead to this happy realization was first openly suggested in November, 1927, by our fellow Cooper Club member, Mrs. F. T. Bicknell of Los Angeles. Soon thereafter, the editor the *Condor* conducted a post-card vote of C. O. C. members, with the result that the California Valley Quail was given first choice; the California Condor came second, the Wren-tit third, and the Western Bluebird fourth (see *Condor*, XXIX, 1927, p. 276, xxx, 1928, p. 194, XXXIII, 1931, p. 80). Many other organizations soon began to promote the idea and to take votes, with the California Valley Quail given first place right along. A State Committee was then formed, whose activities finally led to the introduction into the recent State Legislature, of the bill now signed. In these later activities, besides Mrs. Bicknell and others, Mr. C. A. Harwell, Mr. W. I. Follett and Mr. B. C. Cain have served notably and effectively.

A brief systematic paper of much more than usual interest for faunistics is that by Mr. A. J. van Rossem, entitled "Descriptions of New Birds from the Mountains of Southern Nevada" (*Trans. San Diego Soc. Nat. Hist.*, vi, June 5, 1931, pp. 327-332). The Charleston and nearby Sheep mountains had never been worked by an ornithologist until Mr. van Rossem, in the interests of Mr. Donald R. Dickey, went there in 1930. As a first result, four new subspecies are now named, a Steller Jay, a Pigmy Nuthatch, a Brown Creeper, and a Junco. These clearly evidence Rocky Mountain relationships, rather than Sierra Nevadan. Further field work on the Charleston and contiguous mountain ranges is to be done before a final report will be published. This we await with expectation that it will help materially to explain some of the distributional puzzles at present pertaining to our understanding of the bird life along the eastern border of California.

Field work is under way at the present time in the interests of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, as follows: Mr. Chester C. Lamb

is continuing the program of general vertebrate collecting undertaken some years ago in Lower California; Mr. Raymond M. Gilmore is aboard the U. S. S. *Northland* for its season's cruise of the Bering Sea and Arctic coasts of Alaska, to take every opportunity to collect birds and mammals; Misses Annie M. Alexander and Louise Kellogg are visiting type localities of various mammals throughout the Rocky Mountain region; Dr. Jean M. Linsdale is making an ecological study of the vertebrates of the Toyabe Mountains, central Nevada; Dr. Alden H. Miller is exploring the Great Basin and Rocky Mountain regions for juncos; Dr. E. Raymond Hall, Mr. Ward C. Russell, Mr. Robert T. Orr, Mr. J. Kenneth Douth, and Mr. Donald M. Hatfield are working a series of localities in southern and eastern Nevada, chiefly for mammals; and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas T. McCabe are continuing their field studies upon the birds and mammals of central British Columbia.

Animal distribution is not a matter of fixity or permanence, save perhaps as considered momentarily. Especially are the ranges of *birds* mobile affairs, constantly in flux; and the many factors involved—extrinsic, environmental, and internal, having to do with the bird's own mechanism—are immensely worth a student's while to seek out and to appraise in point of relative importance for different species. These ideas are brought out and emphasized in most convincing fashion by Dr. Herbert Friedmann, Curator of Birds in the United States National Museum, in a recent article of his entitled "Bird Distribution and Bird-Banding" (*Bird-Banding*, II, April, 1931, pp. 45-51). Dr. Friedmann points out that American students have a unique opportunity at the present time, of finding out the ways in which bird populations spread, by watching the behavior of the newly introduced European Starling. Some subjects of such observation—supplemented, it is suggested, by the bird-banding method—are as follows: Sex-ratio; single versus multiple broods; the actual distance from the original nest-site to the territories, next year, of the young from that nest; the effects of early versus late breeding seasons; the effects of inbreeding; the migration of groups within the species; determination of the extent of the feeding ranges and breeding territories. It is of great importance to the

systematist, to the student of faunas, to the general evolutionist, to learn such details as these concerning the process by which the boundaries of birds' ranges extend or retract in various directions and under different sets of conditions.

Since the appearance of Dr. Linsdale's article in May issue of the *Condor*, wherein were made public startling disclosures as to the extent of the use in California of that virulent poison, thallium, against rodents, numerous other facts along the same line have come to our attention. These all bring overwhelming conviction that poisoning of wild animals has come to be a highly destructive practice—when judged in the interests of the country at large. It seems to us now that the only justifying condition for employment of poison against animals other than rodents on cultivated ground, and rats and mice about buildings, is when bubonic plague or rabies or foot-and-mouth disease immediately threatens a locality. The Biological Survey, under whose auspices or with the cooperation of which, all or most of this poisoning is going on, works apparently with the immediate interests, only, of the agriculturist and stock man in view. And close analysis of the problem leads us to suspect that the ultimate best interests of even these minorities of our citizenry are not thereby being conserved. It is possible that the present administration of the government Bureau named, will change its policy, if enough other, less self-centered interests make known their claims for recognition, and especially the factual basis for their views. To this end, we would be glad to learn of further definite cases of, especially, poisoning of *birds*, any species whatsoever and under whatever auspices. Details of fact may be sent to the undersigned.—J. GRINNELL, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California.*

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

WETMORE ON THE AVIFAUNA OF THE PLEISTOCENE IN FLORIDA.*—This recent paper by Dr. Wetmore is a major contribution to the avian paleontology of North America. It describes a collection which in wealth of material is second only to the Pleistocene deposits of California and

*The Avifauna of the Pleistocene in Florida. By Alexander Wetmore. Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, vol. 85, no. 2, pp. 1-41, 6 plates, 16 figures in text, April 13, 1931.