

not hatched. Elsewhere the vast majority contained either new-hatched young or fledglings nearly ready to leave the nest. The enormous number of nests in the willows (a single tree contained 34) were not closely investigated. In the rushes, one might have spent a day forcing his way through the tall, dense greenery, with from two to five or six nests continually within reach, yet leave untouched larger areas where no locomotion but swimming was possible. Yet judging from the small fractions I had time to cover he could hardly have found a dozen nests in which the young were alive and vigorous. Of the hundreds of broods I saw, all, practically speaking, were either dead (the vast majority) or feebly alive in some stage of starvation or grilling and parching by sunburn. A few evidently healthy adults were still passing in and out of the swamp, but the usual noisy cloud of enraged parents no longer hung over the invader's head.

"Estimates" of numbers of birds, where the whole flock cannot be seen at one time, are among the most absurd of the wild guesses on which naturalists too often rely, and the writer dislikes making one in the present case. We have, however, some basis in the laborious and extremely complete counts which have been made in similar rush or tule swamps where we have banded the nestlings. On May 30 and 31 of the same year, for example, we banded 2150 nestlings in rookeries whose total area would amount to a negligible fraction of the one in question, and which were much less densely inhabited. Applying this rough unit of measurement as best I can, and including the adults, a total of 30,000 birds destroyed seems to me very conservative. All were of the uniquely Californian species, *Agelaius tricolor* Audubon.

In the present case it is my intention to chronicle, not to discuss. A single point, however, my field experience with the Sacramento red-wings inclines me to press. This species possesses a limited and peculiarly vulnerable breeding range, largely in the populous and agricultural Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys. The rookeries are large and correspondingly few, and with the technique employed in this case, the total extermination of the bird, or the reduction in numbers which spells extermination, would be a matter of the utmost immediate simplicity; nay, considering the policy of concealment which too often shrouds the movements of this branch of the Government, this very thing may be taking, or have taken, place at this moment.—T. MCCABE, *The Faculty Club, Berkeley, California, August 17, 1931.*

## EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

The regular biennial membership roster of the Cooper Ornithological Club will be printed in the coming May issue of the *Condor*, which will go to press on or before April 15. Corrections of address, or any other information pertaining to membership, should be sent to Mr. John McB. Robertson, Buena Park, California, who is compiling the manuscript for the roster.

It is proper for the Editors of the *Condor* to make acknowledgment from time to time of helps received from fellow Cooper Club members in the publishing of our magazine. We are therefore glad now to make record of the services of Miss Selma Werner in preparing the Index for the last year's volume—just as she has done for the several years preceding. Also we have been helped in following-to-copy on proofs by Miss Margaret W. Wythe and Miss Susan E. Chattin.

At the Detroit meeting of the American

Ornithologists' Union, October 19, 1931, the West was again given recognition, this time in the election to Membership of Mr. Clinton G. Abbott, Director of the Natural History Museum of San Diego. Four other members were elected: Mr. Oliver L. Austin of North Eastham, Massachusetts; Mr. W. Wedgwood Bowen of Philadelphia; Mr. Bayard H. Christy of Pittsburgh; and Mrs. Margaret Morse Nice of Columbus, Ohio. Since much of Mrs. Nice's bird work has been done in Oklahoma, we are almost justified in claiming her election, too, as a "plume" for the West.

The death of Dr. David Starr Jordan took place at Stanford University, September 19, 1931, when he was past eighty years of age. For many years he was a Cooper Club member, and in other ways he showed warm interest in ornithology. This was most in evidence when Jordan was a young man, as set forth in the

pleasant reminiscences of him by Dr. Barton Warren Evermann in the present issue of the *Condor* (p. 6). Indeed, as in the cases of so many other men who have reached scientific prominence in their later years, bird study in the field doubtless constituted a profitable phase of his intellectual development.

It is a pleasure to express publicly our hearty commendation of the work being carried on in California by Mr. George Tonkin, United States Game Protector, under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Especially during the curtailed hunting season just passed there was much infraction of various of the game laws. In particular, the now wholly protected shore-birds came in for much disturbance. In a number of such cases the malefactors were brought to justice, this affording wholesome influence in curbing more widespread illegal killing of birds. Because Mr. Tonkin's headquarters are in Berkeley, we happened to have opportunity of observing the effectiveness of his methods. No doubt the other Game Protectors in the West have been similarly active. This arm of the work of the U. S. Biological Survey is a most important one for wild-life conservation.

Volume II of the "Scientific Publications of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History" consists of a technical treatise upon methods of taking "Measurements of Birds" (165 pp., 151 figs.). The authors are S. Prentiss Baldwin, Harry C. Oberholser, and Leonard G. Worley; the excellent line drawings here reproduced were done by James M. Valentine. This finely printed brochure constitutes, further, "Contribution No. 17 from the Baldwin Bird Research Laboratory, Gates Mills, Ohio", and it was "Issued, October 14, 1931". The need for just this sort of manual for exact and uniform measuring of birds has long been felt. Mr. Baldwin and his co-workers have met this need in admirable and authoritative fashion. We recommend its adoption as a guide everywhere that careful systematic work with birds is contemplated or is under way. The price is only \$1.85, bound and carriage prepaid, which, of course, nowhere near repays actual cost of publication, thanks to the generosity of Mr. Baldwin toward the ornithological public. Copies may be had from the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, 2717 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio.—J.G.

On the occasion of Professor William E. Ritter's seventh-fifth birthday, November 19, 1931, numerous written expressions of good will and appreciation were sent him by friends and colleagues in the University of California. One of these felicitations, addressed to him from his associates in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, read as follows:

The naturalist now, and down from the days of Aristotle, strives to find out the meanings of things-animate. The first step is to see and to record things as they are; then comes the effort to explain what has been seen, to derive implications in-the-large. Such effort at its best involves a mental ability to perceive the widest range of facts and interrelationships and to marshal these in various ways until acceptable interpretations become apparent. All this procedure constitutes what may be called reflective zoology, or more specifically, interpretative natural history.

Within the ken of a number of us, Professor Ritter has become far and away the most prominent exponent in this field of interpretative natural history. In his painstaking manner of watching woodpeckers in the field, of monkeys in their cages, of beavers in the parks, to see *what* they *do*, and *why*, we have had set for us a naturalistic pattern of high standard. It was a fortunate day for those of us who work under the auspices of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology when Dr. Ritter came to occupy a room within our precincts. Here we, each of our group individually, have had the privilege of hearing almost week by week the results of his findings, and especially of watching the workings of a mind eagerly seeking explanations and yet conscientiously concerned to handle facts and inferences accurately.

These present lines, then, are written as being in the nature of an acknowledgment—of Dr. Ritter's immediate influence among us other, junior workers in the field of vertebrate natural history. We are sincerely sensible of the benefits we have one and all derived from his association with us. We are confident that the plane of *our* observing and of our reflecting upon what *we* have observed has been greatly raised by his example.

This, be it emphasized, is a *local* influence, through personal contact—quite a different matter from the far-reaching influence upon the thought of the times through Dr. Ritter's many publications. Yet, down through the future years this

local influence, we venture to hope, will extend quite as surely in ever lengthening radius.—J.G.

Friends of the American White Pelican will be glad to know that warden service has now been provided for the largest existing nesting colony of these birds. This colony, on Anaho Island in Pyramid Lake, Nevada, has for a number of years been a bird reservation, but it has been without actual protection until the summer of 1931, when Mr. Charles C. Cooper, of Sutcliffe, Nevada, was employed by the Biological Survey as warden for the three months of June, July and August. Through long residence at the Lake, Mr. Cooper is familiar with local conditions as they affect White Pelicans, and in addition he has a genuine interest in the birds themselves. Under his guardianship, it is expected that the colony, which has been seriously interfered with for the past several seasons, will again produce the normal number of young. It was hoped by many bird students that the fantastic rock formations at the northern end of Pyramid Lake, locally known as The Needles, also would be set aside as a wild life refuge. Here the Lake's quota of Farallon Cormorants, California Gulls, and a majority of the American Mergansers nest. In response to pleas for protection of these birds, a bill, H. R. 13276 "To Establish the Needles Rocks Wild Life Refuge," was introduced into the House of Representatives of the second session of the Seventy-first Congress of the United States. Although passed by the House of Representatives on January 5, 1931, this bill was, so far as we have been able to learn, never brought up in the Senate. It is greatly to be hoped that the measure will be more successful in the new session of Congress. Anaho Island and the proposed Needles Rocks Wild Life Refuge are included within the boundaries of an Indian Reservation. This is perhaps fortunate, inasmuch as the Bureau of Indian Affairs now is making an effort to have the winter flow of the Truckee River again, as it did naturally, enter Pyramid and Winnemucca lakes. At the present time, the water is diverted into a dry sink where it is of but slight benefit. Each of the two mentioned bird colonies is suffering because of the lowering of the lake level. Inasmuch as raising the water level seems to be the key here to remedying unfortunate conditions (as they

have to do not only with trout fishing, with agricultural pursuits of the Indians, with nesting grounds for wild fowl sought in autumn by hunters, but also with the nesting water birds) it is greatly to be hoped that the Bureau of Biological Survey will join with the Bureau of Indian Affairs in requesting that the normal flow of water in the Truckee River, at least in winter, be returned to these lakes.—E.R.H.

#### THE DETROIT MEETING OF THE A. O. U.

The Forty-ninth Stated Meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union convened in Detroit, October 19 to 23, 1931, at the Book-Cadillac Hotel. The holding of sessions in a hotel was an innovation at first regarded with distrust by members accustomed to the museum setting of previous meetings. The carefully worked out plans of Mrs. Etta Wilson, Chairman of the local committee, proved conclusively, however, that a background of zinc cases is not a necessary adjunct to a wholly successful meeting of bird students.

Monday, October 19, ushered in the meetings with a pleasant prologue of greetings in the lobby between old friends and the making of new acquaintances. To many of us the keenest pleasure was to meet Althea R. Sherman, whose carefully made and zestfully recorded notes have instructed and entertained us for many years. Monday afternoon and evening were occupied with the session of the Fellows, twenty-two being present at their dinner, and with the meeting of the Fellows and Members. All the old officers were re-elected. Since there were no vacancies to be filled no proposals of Fellows had been made. From among the list of Associates proposed for advancement to the rank of Members five were elected: Clinton G. Abbott, A. O. Austin, W. W. Bowen, B. H. Christy, and Mrs. M. M. Nice. A pleasant innovation was the ladies' dinner, held at the same time as the Fellows' dinner and ably presided over by Mrs. Wilson.

Fifty-four papers were listed for presentation at the public meetings, and in the adjacent parlors was an exhibition of 64 paintings and 72 photographs, all of exceptional merit. Among the paintings the "Ruffed Grouse" by Walter A. Weber, attracted, we believe, the largest number of favorable comments. The group of 15 original paintings made by Francis