

## NOTES AND NEWS

The sixteenth annual meeting of the Cooper Ornithological Club has been planned for the spring, probably in late March or in April, in San Diego, California. Recent inquiry of Clinton G. Abbott assures us of the continued desire of the Natural History Museum there to play host to the Club. In spite of war-time conditions it is reported that we can carry forward our scientific program and that out-of-town members can be taken care of. Perhaps one of the chief duties of those not actively drawn into defense work is to maintain and advance our scientific and scholarly institutions, thus preserving these things which have been destroyed or unrecognizably altered in many sections of the world. We admire Mr. Abbott's urge to carry on, and all members who can should plan to participate in the annual meeting.

We learn with deep regret of the passing of Charles Michael on December 30, 1941. He was an acute and understanding observer of animals, who wrote but a fraction of what he knew and yet contributed a number of excellent articles on California bird-life, particularly of the Yosemite Valley. The names of the Michaels have correctly become a tradition in the natural history of the Yosemite. We can but reflect poignantly on early trips afield with Charles Michael and on the complete satisfaction and comfort he took in the out-of-doors, attitudes which happily were imparted to his companions.—A. H. M.

Readers of the *Condor* are already familiar with some of the early experiences of the Lofberg's at Florence Lake, in the southern Sierra Nevada. A more extensive story of the growth of their alliance with the wild creatures which came to them is now available in a book. The change in attitude of two persons, snowbound two-thirds of the year, from uncertain suspicion and antipathy toward wild animals to sympathetic understanding and active concern with their problems is traced. The coyotes provide such a remarkable plot that a reader, once started, follows it to the end. The book, *Sierra Outpost*, by Lila Lofberg and David Malcolmson, was issued in 1941 by Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, Inc., New York.—J. M. L.

To our surprise and pleasure, the fifth and final volume of the highly important *Handbook of British Birds* (London, H. F. & G. Witherby) has made its appearance on schedule, so far as we can judge. It was issued in September of 1941, little more than a year following the fourth

volume. The authors, Witherby, Jourdain, Ticehurst and Tucker, in this last section deal with the Lari, Alcae, Ralliformes and Galliformes. British birds may seem a remote subject to western ornithologists, but the general values in this handbook for any serious student of birds of the northern hemisphere can not be too highly stressed.—A. H. M.

It is not as a rule necessary to review articles appearing in other ornithological journals readily accessible to readers of the *Condor*. However, scientific conscience compels us to comment on one aspect of a recent paper by A. M. Woodbury entitled "Animal Migration—Periodic-Response Theory" (*Auk*, 58, 1941:463-505). This survey of migration may be useful to those not well read in the field but it is marred by unwarranted claims of novelty for the ideas set forth in the discourse. Antecedent books and articles by numerous competent writers in the fields of migration and periodicity have provided the ingredients and essentially the synthesis of the concept that is offered.—A. H. M.

### PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

A continuation of Ridgway's "Birds of North and Middle America" is now before us in tangible form as Part 9 of this work (*U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull.* 50, Part IX, 1941 [our copy received October 28]: ix + 254 pp., 16 figs. in text; 40 cents). This volume has been completed by Herbert Friedmann who has utilized in so far as possible the diagnoses and synonymies left in manuscript form by Ridgway, and by Charles W. Richmond who contributed to these phases of the first eight volumes. In spite of the use made of earlier material and the co-authorship of Ridgway and Friedmann, Part 9 is likely to become known, correctly, as Friedmann's work built on Ridgway's plan. Part 9 is less than half the size of the smallest of preceding sections and includes treatment of only four relatively small groups: the cranes (Gruidae), the rails (Rallidae), the sun-grebes (Heliornithidae) and the sun-bitterns (Eurypygidae). Friedmann explains that he reduced the size of the volume to permit immediate publication. We take this to mean that its total scope was reduced but that there were no reductions within the accounts of individual species.

Although the plan of the work is like that of the preceding part issued 22 years ago, there are a few innovations. A distinct improvement is the placement of drawings of heads, wings and

feet in the text with the accounts of the species to which they pertain rather than at the end of the volume. Likewise an improvement is the use of many more specimens, when available, for calculation of average measurements of races. Thus, Friedmann has broken away from the statistically fallacious attitude of Ridgway, who seemed content with averages based on a "standard" ten or a dozen specimens. The organization of the statement of range into paragraphs dealing separately with breeding range, winter range, and casual occurrences is new and helpful. One change that is not an advance in our opinion is elimination from the keys of parenthetical indications of geographic range.

The lists of literature in the synonymies become astoundingly lengthy as a result of the wealth of ornithological publication in the last few decades. For example, the listings for a common species like the American Coot take up six pages of fine print. These bibliographies, although not entirely complete, are of inestimably high value.

The vernacular names of races that are employed usually reflect the specific relations of the bird and consequently in a number of instances, as with the Clapper Rails, improve upon the A.O.U. Check-list of 1931. But why this improvement has not been made uniformly is puzzling. Thus, quite logically, the "Light-footed Rail" of southern California becomes the Light-footed Clapper Rail; but the subspecies of *Grus canadensis* remain little Brown Crane, Sandhill Crane, Florida Sandhill Crane (Florida Crane of the Check-list) and Cuban Sandhill Crane, and the Black Rails (*Lateralus* [*Creciscus*] *jamaicensis*) are named Eastern Black Rail, Farallon Rail (!) and Jamaican Black Rail. Incidentally, the "Farallon Rail" has not been known to breed on the Farallon Islands, as is implied (p. 157), nor is it at all likely that it would do so. A name for this race that is much more fitting and which has had wide use in the West is California Black Rail.

Friedmann's taxonomic treatment of the cranes and rails of the Pacific coast of North America agrees with that of Peters (Check-list of the Birds of the World, 2, 1934), with one exception. The Pacific race of the Virginia Rail (*Rallus limicola zetarius* Peters, known formerly as *Rallus virginianus pacificus* Dickey) is shown to be unworthy of recognition as a result of a survey of its supposed characters of size. The Clapper Rails of the salt marshes of both sides of North and Central America are united in one species (*Rallus longirostris*), we think correctly, by both Peters and Friedmann.

The successful efforts of Friedmann to continue the Ridgway volumes, in which he incorporates his own good judgment and experience,

will find ready appreciation among North American ornithologists.—Alden H. Miller.

## MINUTES OF COOPER CLUB MEETINGS

### SOUTHERN DIVISION

SEPTEMBER.—The regular monthly meeting of the Southern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was held at the Los Angeles Museum on Tuesday, September 30, 1941, with President Hildegard Howard in the chair and about 50 members and guests present. The minutes of the August meeting were approved as read. The following applications for membership were read: Miss Julianne G. Bayliss, 1206 W. 70th St., Los Angeles, Calif., proposed by Dr. Hildegard Howard; Mr. R. Elmer Belt, 1893 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif., proposed by Dr. Loye Miller; Mrs. Frances F. Roberts, Encinitas, Calif., Mr. Cecil A. Poole, 830 Chapman St., San Jose, Calif., and Walter A. Ross, 626 W. Caldwell St., Compton, Calif., proposed by W. Lee Chambers.

Under new business, Mr. Chambers announced the purchase of a new screen which was to become the property of the Cooper Club and was paid for by generous members.

President Howard then presented the speaker of the evening, Dr. Loye Miller, who gave a most interesting lecture entitled "Studying Nature by Sound." The meeting was then opened to discussion. Under observation Mrs. M. F. Coble mentioned seeing 50 Wood Ibis, many stilts, egrets, and cormorants at the Carlsbad sloughs.

George Willett gave a detailed and comprehensive report on the 1941 A.O.U. meeting held in Denver, Colorado. Mr. H. P. Davis raised the question pertaining to the revoking of scientific collecting permits and the likelihood of their renewal. George Willett and R. T. Moore made comments but could not answer the questions.

Adjourned.—IRWIN D. NOKES, *Secretary*.

OCTOBER.—The regular monthly meeting of the Southern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was held at the Los Angeles Museum on Tuesday, October 28, 1941, with President Hildegard Howard in the chair and about 75 members and guests present. The minutes of the September meeting were approved as read. The following applications for membership were read: Gordon D. Alcorn, Grays Harbor College, Aberdeen, Washington, proposed by Dr. Alden H. Miller; Luther C. Goldman, P. O. Box 1242, Brawley, Calif., proposed by Alvin W. Elder; James Boswell Young, 2516 Talbott Ave., Louisville, Kentucky, and Ruth M. Price, 315 El Nido, Monrovia, Calif., proposed by W. Lee Chambers.

Dr. Howard then introduced the speaker of the evening, Dr. Clinton G. Abbott, who gave an illustrated lecture entitled "The Lure of Lower California."