

Archaeopteryx is a famous example of mosaic evolution; the South African apeman *Australopithecus* is another. However, these are not exceptions, and as far as the songbirds go, one finds a mixture of "primitive" and "advanced" characters in almost every family. It is this fact of mosaic evolution which, perhaps more than any other, is responsible for the divergence of opinion on the arrangement of the families of songbirds into "more primitive" and "higher" ones. Depending on the organ system chosen, whether wing, bill, legs, or brain, a different sequence will emerge.

There is a challenge to weigh the different characters and to use them in combination as the basis of a new system. This has been tried in recent years by Mayr and Amadon (Amer. Mus. Novit., No. 1496, 1951:1-42), Wetmore (Smiths. Misc. Coll., 117, 1951:1-22), Amadon (Proc. Calcutta Zool. Soc., Mookerjee Mem. Vol., 1957:259-268), and Delacour and Vaurie (Los Angeles County Mus., Contrib. in Sci. No. 16, 1957:1-6). Each of these systems makes the explicit or implicit claim to be superior to the others. As mental exercises these proposals are stimulating, and together with many others previously proposed they contribute to the ultimate understanding of avian evolution. Unfortunately, however, this delightful diversity of opinion is not very practical. If the student of the birds of the world opens the pages of a faunistic list, local handbook, or national or international journal, he must be able to remember each of the five or six sequences most frequently used in the world literature. Otherwise he will not know whether to look at the beginning or the end of the songbird sequence when he wants to find the pipits, shrikes, or crows.

This chaotic situation has long been a source of annoyance to working ornithologists. As a result, at the XI International Ornithological Congress at Basel, a committee was charged with the task of proposing a sequence of songbird families that would be acceptable to the majority, and the acceptance of which might lead to uniformity instead of the present chaos. The committee members voted individually on the three sequences most frequently used throughout the world, and all six voting members (Berlioz, Dementiev, Junge, Moreau, Salomonsen, and Stresemann) expressed their preference for the sequence that starts with the Old World Insect Eaters and ends with the crows and birds of paradise.

The reason for their preference was stated by several members of the Basel Committee as follows: it is the sequence most frequently used in the world literature and is no more arbitrary than any other proposed sequence. No claim is made in the report of the committee that the adopted sequence is the best possible system or even a final one. There is no reason why anatomists and other students of avian classification should not continue to make proposals for revision and state their reasons for considering a different arrangement as superior. Indeed, our present knowledge of the comparative anatomy and ethology of passerine birds is still so slight that enormous future progress in our understanding is to be expected. However, until the superiority of a different sequence is clearly established, it would seem advantageous for the ornithologists in the different parts of the world to follow an internationally endorsed sequence. This would surely facilitate communication.

The sequence adopted by the Committee of the International Congress, the so-called Basel Committee, was published by Mayr and Greenway (Breviora no. 58, 1956:1-11).—ERNST MAYR, *Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge, Massachusetts, December 5, 1957.*

The Dickcissel in California.—On November 19, 1957, a bird of sparrow size was taken in one of my banding traps located on the campus of Humboldt State College at Arcata, California. As I was preparing to band the bird I realized that it was of a species unfamiliar to me. It was taken alive to the Wildlife Department at the college where it was identified as a Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) and added to the Humboldt State College collection.

There was no indication that this individual had been a captive for it was quite wild and in excellent condition, with heavy fat deposits, both subcutaneous and in the body cavity. The bird was a male and was in the typical winter plumage of the species. The black throat patch was almost lacking except for a few black tipped feathers. The chestnut on the wing was very distinctive as was the yellow breast. The bird had evidently entered the trap in quest of the bread crumbs used for bait.

Apparently this is the second record of the species in California. The first record was based on an individual captured in September, 1948, in Santa Monica by Mrs. Norris Kittinger, who released the bird after identification (Condor, 51, 1949:44).—JACK B. WOODY, *Humboldt State College, Arcata, California, January 15, 1958.*