

to assure that all papers published maintain a high standard of quality and contain material within the scope of the journal.

One of the functions of California Birds will be the publication of properly authenticated field observations of birds found in California which are significantly outside their normal range. The time has long since passed (if it ever existed) when it was feasible to validate all noteworthy observations with a collected specimen. Yet, for field observations to be of value there must be some system whereby serious students can ascertain which of the multitudinous observations are acceptable beyond any reasonable doubt. Photographs serve to document many observations and are certainly of immense value whenever obtainable. In some cases specimens will still be required; however, the only possible documentation for the majority of field observations is a detailed description taken at the time of the observation. A Rare Bird Committee will be established to review significant observations documented by photographs and/or detailed description. Only those reports accepted unanimously by the Committee will be published in California Birds. The methods of operation of the Rare Bird Committee described below are very similar to those employed by Rare Bird Committees in Great Britain and in Belgium.

California Birds is published by California Field Ornithologists, a new society whose objectives are: (1) to provide a medium for publication of the results of countless hours of field study by California's large and ever-growing army of amateur and professional observers, and (2) to upgrade the standards of these observers through the communication afforded by this publication. Membership in California Field Ornithologists is open to everyone. All classes of members are entitled to receive California Birds. —AMC.

THE FUNCTIONING OF THE RARE BIRD COMMITTEE

All reports on the occurrences of unusual birds submitted for publication in California Birds will be sent to the Secretary of the Rare Bird Committee. The Secretary will send the entire report to the first member of the Committee. The first member of the Committee checks the report and draws his own conclusions about the validity of the

report; he then sends his decision along with comments back to the Secretary, and sends the report on to the second member of the Committee. The process is repeated until the last member of the Committee receives the report, and he sends it back to the Secretary along with his own comments. If all members of the Committee agree the bird was correctly identified, it is accepted. If a majority of the members feel the bird was incorrectly identified, the record is rejected. In all other cases the report along with the comments received from the first round is again circulated to the members of the Committee for a second judgement. If it is neither accepted nor rejected on the second round it is saved for discussion at the annual meeting.

The members of the Committee are not allowed to discuss any record under consideration on the first round with other members of the Committee although they can discuss it with anyone else outside of the Committee; this allows each member of the Committee to review the record without being influenced by other Committee members on the first round. On the second round the Committee members are allowed to read the comments of their fellow Committee members, and they are allowed to draw a new conclusion if they feel they were wrong on the first round.

There will be no set rules that the Committee members will have to follow in judging the validity of individual records. However, the members will have to state the reasons for their decisions in their comments sent to the Secretary. It is hoped that each member of the Committee will view each record with an open mind and consider all possibilities presented by the available evidence.

The Committee should be made up of a non-voting Secretary and between five and ten voting members. Hopefully the voting members should be representatives of the various areas of the state. A member of the Rare Bird Committee must be fully aware of the many problems that arise in field identification, and must have a good understanding of status of the birds of California. —*GMcC.*