

THE WILSON BULLETIN

A Quarterly Magazine Devoted to the Study of Birds.
Official Organ of the Wilson Ornithological Club.

Edited by **LYNDS JONES.**

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Editorial

The September number of the Bulletin will be wholly given over to Mr. Frank L. Burns' "A Monograph of the Broad-winged Hawk." It will cover some 150 pages of the regular size, and will be amply illustrated. This is the work upon which Mr. Burns has been engaged for a number of years, and will come nearer being a complete life history of this hawk than anything that has been done for any other species thus far. This paper is an illustration of what the Wilson Ornithological Club was organized to accomplish through its method of coöperation in bird study. We have no need to commend the paper to anybody, for it commends itself.

In another place in this issue there will be found a brief account of a summer bird course which is being offered to interested persons in general. In continuation of the work attempted last summer on Pelee Island, Ontario, by the writer and his company of eight students, August and the first half of September of

the present summer will be spent on Point Pelee, Ontario, in further studies of the southward movements of the birds in that especially favored place. Ten students will participate in the work, and it is hoped that they may be so distributed as to trace the direction of large flights, if any such occur. It is hardly necessary to state that these late summer classes are the direct result of the attention which has been given to the study of birds at Oberlin College since 1895, when the first class for bird study was organized in any American college. Now that the birds are receiving some attention, at least, in the public schools and in many colleges, we may confidently expect that there will be many young men and women with sufficient knowledge of and interest in birds to make many other special summer investigations possible. There is great need for studies of this special nature at all times of year, and we expect to see something of this kind done in the not distant future, especially for the spring movements in especially favorable places. Is it too much to expect that ere long the present practice of so many people of rushing off to some popular or fashionable summer resort, from which they are more than likely to return more worn than when they went, will give place to plans for spending that time in some healthful place where birds and other creatures may be studied and enjoyed, and where some real rest and recreation may be gained along with keen pleasure in delving into the secrets of this wonderful world all about us?

The first article in the May-June number of "The Condor," "The Literary and Other Principles in Ornithological Writing," by Milton S. Ray, is, to our mind, well chosen and well done. Mr. Ray's plea for readableness in ornithological writings, and his protest that simply because it is readable it is therefore not scientific, ought to be given honest consideration. It is too true of scientific writings in general that they are put into such unnecessarily technical language, often, that they become wholly unavailable to any but the initiated in that particular branch of science. This ought not so to be. The world is entitled to the results of investigations for which it is always paying in the setting apart of such investigators for their special work and thus removing them from the great army who are carrying the burden of the "day's work." We earnestly second Mr. Ray's plea for "set vernacular names based on the true relationships of birds." There is really no sound reason why this cannot be done. If it be objected that by so doing much of the sentiment of bird study would be sacrificed, we reply that this would be true of only those per-

sons who would not in any event use names accurately. We have never been quite able to understand why a paper which states at the outset that the names used in it conform strictly to the latest A. O. U. list, but in which its author chooses to use the English instead of the classical names, of that list, should be stamped at once as unscientific and unquotable. Why isn't one set of names as accurate as the other? In the long run it has proved true that the vernacular names of the A. O. U. list have been more stable than the classical names. Scientific accuracy is, of course, absolutely necessary in any event, but are the arbitrary rules which have been laid down to measure the degree of accuracy wholly tenable?

During the absence of the editor, from July 28 to September 12, the indulgence of correspondents is asked. Letters addressed to Oberlin or to Birmingham will receive attention, probably after some little delay in many cases.

Field Notes

A HOUSE WREN DRIVEN FROM ITS NEST BY SPIDERS.—On the morning of June 12, 1910, I was greeted in my garden by the song of a House Wren. At first I thought it must be a straggling bird that had dropped in to glean a breakfast among my trees, but on the following morning it was singing as usual, and close by a Downy Woodpecker's stub that I had cut down and fastened in a tree, thinking thus to attract some bird to it as a nesting site. I soon discovered the female busily looking the trees over, and now and then inspecting the stub.

The next day I saw Mrs. House Wren carrying sticks into the hole and I felt quite satisfied in having a pair of House Wrens for tenants, this being the first pair that had ever nested in my place. About a week after I missed the delightful song, so started to investigate. Rapping on the stub no bird appeared, and I soon saw that the edges of the hole were alive with small spiders. I took the stub down and opened it, and found the nest swarming with these spiders. The birds in building the nest had used small twigs entirely and had thickly stuccoed them with the white egg sacs of a species of spider, that had hatched before the Wren had deposited her own eggs, and instead of making a home for her young, she had unwittingly gathered together a fine family of spiders and provided them with a well sheltered retreat.

South Auburn, Rhode Island.

HARRY S. HATHAWAY.