

THE WILSON BULLETIN

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EDITORIAL

As we prepare this issue of the BULLETIN we learn that the St. Louis Bird Club is planning to celebrate the ninetieth birthday of Mr. Otto Widmann, which occurs on June 15th. Many of our readers may recall the delightfully written autobiography of Mr. Widmann which was published in the WILSON BULLETIN for September, 1927. In behalf of the Wilson Ornithological Club we offer our congratulations to Mr. Widmann.

PROFESSOR GORDON WILSON, a former secretary of our organization, has published a synopsis of his doctor's thesis, which has Alexander Wilson for the subject. Professor Wilson displays a sympathetic appreciation of Wilson's many-sided nature, and the brief abstract indicates a thorough study of the life of his subject. While Alexander Wilson is given full credit for his scientific work, he is regarded "primarily as a poet, essayist, and letter-writer, and as such, he is one of the greatest interpreters of America." Perhaps a literary student would be prone to magnify the literary qualities of the man, just as the scientist will understand and appreciate best his scientific work. And the artist may emphasize his artistic power. We hope to be able to present in the BULLETIN some contribution by Professor Wilson on Alexander Wilson.

INVESTIGATION of the "duck sickness" in Utah and elsewhere is still in progress. Formerly this malady of ducks was supposed to be due to excessive alkali in the water, resulting, perhaps, from drainage, dry seasons, and evaporation. More recently Kalmbach (*Science*, LXXII, Dec. 26, 1930) reports experiments which indicate that the symptoms of the duck sickness may be produced in healthy birds by feeding to them the tissues of the sick birds; and the disease may be passed on to a second, or third, bird by the same method. The feeding of natural and synthetic alkalis has not produced comparable results. Later, Giltner and Couch (*op. cit.*, p. 660) isolated and identified *Clostridium botulinum*, type C, (same as *Bacillus botulinus*) from the mud in an infected area in Tule Lake, California. This is the bacillus which causes the disease known as Botulism. A recent editorial in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (March 14, 1931, p. 864) gives a critical review of the facts and concludes that "it must be shown that the preformed toxin and not merely the bacillus was present in the suspected food or the tissues of the diseased animals."

Science, for May 22, 1931, (Vol. 73, No. 1899, p. 12) gives a very brief report of the recent meeting of the American Society of Mammalogists. It appears that the poisoning campaign of the U. S. Biological Survey was again strongly condemned, charges being made that the Survey is playing into the hands of the livestock industry and that it has distributed poison to livestock men. It was also reported that the Survey men defended themselves by asserting that the quantity of poison used has been reduced from 13,000 ounces in 1930, to 10,000 ounces in 1931, with a proposed reduction to 8,000 ounces in 1932, a total of 31,000 ounces of poison used in three years on the wild life of the country. Who will say that this is not wholesale destruction? Folks are beginning to wonder if the Survey does not need re-christening, and certainly a reorganization would be welcome.

DURING the spring of 1931 a printed circular entitled "Facts About Hawks" was distributed by Jack Miner. It would be too difficult to abstract this circular with full justice to the author; suffice it to say that Mr. Miner is not only opposed to the protection of hawks, but he favors the destruction of most kinds of hawks. At the close of the circular the author gives a report of the stomach analyses of about sixty-five birds of prey.

A month later, April 7, 1931, there was issued from Toronto a four-page leaflet entitled "The Brodie Club Examines Jack Miner's 'Facts About Hawks'." This is a careful analysis of the arguments and logic of Mr. Miner's circular, and, though judicial, is much more favorable to the hawks. It seems to us that all such controversial matter should be signed by the author or authors. This letter is quite proper and wholesome, and does not deserve the stigma of anonymity.

It is beyond our scope ordinarily to comment on the major ornithological journals. However, the last issue of the *Ibis* for 1930 merits special mention. In addition to the regular full sized number for October there appeared two supplementary numbers entitled a "Review of the Genus *Cisticola*", by Rear-Admiral H. Lynes. The text covers 673 pages, while the twenty colored plates are bound together to form another supplement. Such a voluminous monograph is seldom published by a periodical, but in this case was furnished to subscribers and members gratis. This publication formed a fitting finale to the editorial regime of Mr. William Lutley Selater.