

EDITORIAL

The stimulating report on Graduate Research in Ornithology in the March issue of the *Bulletin* has sharpened focus on the scope of projects currently under investigation. It is encouraging to note the renewed interest in anatomical studies which must inevitably lead to a better understanding of the relationships among birds. Because of our special interest in avian morphology, we present a plea in behalf of all workers engaged in this phase of ornithology.

In 1947 we began a long-term study of the anatomy and classification of the Cuculiformes. While tabulating available skeletal and alcoholic material in American and foreign museums, it soon became evident that as much time would be consumed in obtaining specimens as would be required for the actual research.

Long ago W. A. Forbes (1881. *Ibis*: 175) wrote as follows: "There are, however, still left a considerable number [of genera] of which I have not as yet succeeded in obtaining any examples . . . I hope, therefore, that any members of the B.O.U., or travellers or naturalists generally, who may have it in their power to obtain specimens of any of these my 'desiderata,' will do all they can to enable me to acquire these forms." More recently, the late Percy R. Lowe (1943. *Ibis*: 490) said: "I cannot help thinking that if ornithologists took as much trouble in procuring specimens in spirit, both at home and abroad, the subject of the classification of birds would be proportionately benefited and expedited. Even in such fine collections in spirit as are to be found in the British Museum, it is rare for the labours of the anatomist in any given group not to be held up by lack of material. . ."

Plagued by this lack of material, ornithologists have perforce published anatomical papers based on one or two specimens. Important though these papers may have been, we now know that individual variation must be considered in any thorough study. At the same time, when statistical analysis of variation is based on inadequate data, anatomical or otherwise, it leads to overweening ostentation and to specious conclusions. Biometrics is an essential tool but it becomes a farce when improperly applied.

Students of human anatomy long have recognized the wide limits of "normal variation" in the origin and pattern of blood vessels, nerves and muscles. The origin of a blood vessel, for example, may be described as normal even though it has such an origin in only 50 percent of specimens. It should be pointed out that experienced human anatomists do not attempt to determine the normal pattern or normal limits of variation for a specific structure until at least a hundred (preferably 150 to 200) specimens have been examined. Can we, then, in avian morphology expect reliable results from descriptions based on but one or two specimens? Recent investigations have shown that certain regions of the avian vertebral column are far more variable than early ornithological literature indicates. May not these early papers, quoted so repeatedly in taxonomic works, be leading us to erroneous conclusions?

Each anatomist must determine, for the specific group being investigated, how many alcoholic specimens are necessary to give a reliable picture. There is, however, no maximum number of accurately sexed, *articulated* skeletons which may be analyzed advantageously: the larger the sample, the greater the reliance which can be placed on statistical results. A paucity of skeletal material produces indicative rather than conclusive results. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the anatomist can study only that material which is available to him.

More than forty avian families are endemic to the New World. Notwithstanding the fact that several of these are monotypic, there is not a single monographic treatment of the total anatomy of any family. The internal anatomy of many genera is unknown. This fact was emphasized by Griscom (1950. *Bull. Mus. Comp. Zool.*, vol. 103, No. 6: 344) when he stated that "In several very large tropical American families based on internal characters (not

determinable in the museum skin), hundreds of species are currently assigned to these families without a shred of evidence that they possess the necessary internal characters!"

If we hope to encourage thorough anatomical studies, and thereby to further the cause of taxonomy, greater emphasis must be placed on the collecting of skeletons and alcoholic material. The collecting of such material must, for the most part, be a function of the larger scientific institutions. In some cases it appears that a change in philosophy towards specimens must be effected: from "skins, more skins" to "skin, skeleton, spirit."

In the meantime, publication of the report on Graduate Research will have served to acquaint anatomists with the work of their contemporaries and may, therefore, facilitate the collecting and exchange of desired material.—A. J. B.

Not long ago we made a point of seeing Walt Disney's 'Beaver Valley,' a beautiful and entertaining motion picture film which could have been soul-satisfying as well. The scene showing the Marsh Hawk (*Circus cyaneus*) passing prey to its mate in midair was thrilling; but how quickly our pleasure changed to dissatisfaction when, listening to a comment on the feeding of that prey to the young hawks, we saw a Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) at its nest! Similarly, we followed a Bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) about, heard words to the effect that it was obtaining food for its young, then were shown a Least Bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*) at its nest. For this particular form of inaccuracy or half-honesty there is no excuse in this enlightened age, and it would certainly have been avoided had the two men who took the photographs—Wilson Club members Karl Maslowski and Murl Deusing—been given a chance to edit the film or commentary. Knowing that there was a mixup in the bird identifications we could not help wondering how many amphibians from far removed corners of the continent had contributed their croaking and trilling to that amusing Rocky Mountain beaver pond burlesque of opera. The film was exceptionally good in some ways. We shall long remember it for its late-working beavers and romping otters. But as a whole it could—and should—have been very much better.—G. M. S.

The color plate fund has climbed steadily. So generous has been the response to our implied request for funds—when we offered for sale prints of the color plate used in the December *Bulletin*—that we shall be able to publish soon the engraving of Hal Harrison's beautiful kodachrome of the Wilson's Warbler at its nest. The engraving is being donated by Samuel A. Grimes. Names of all contributors to the fund will be announced later; but we wish to acknowledge here the money 'with no strings attached' given us by Herbert L. Stoddard, Sr., Dr. and Mrs. Powell Cottrille, Clarence B. Randall, Malvina Trussell, the late Virginia Cavendish, Mr. and Mrs. Richard R. Graber, H. Lewis Batts, Jr., and Eugene Eisenmann.

Richard and Jean Graber are hard at work in San Luis Potosí, México, assisting George H. Lowery, Jr. and Robert J. Newman with their ornithological survey of that state. The final report promises to establish a new standard for field and laboratory work of this sort.

With great interest we learn of the recent coming into being of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society. Dale Arvey was elected president, but his being called to service overseas has placed the reins in the hands of Joe C. Creager of Ponca City. The first number of the Society's *Bulletin* appeared in January, 1951. We can see from perusing this that Oklahoma ornithologists are a lively, forward-looking group.

Those of us who have fed birds in winter have long known how fond birds are of nut meats. Pecans are a special favorite—perhaps because of the high fat and protein content, perhaps (we venture to guess) because they taste good. Herbert Stoddard has found that such in-

sectivorous birds as warblers, titmice and kinglets eat pecan meats avidly. The Pecano Bird Feed Company is offering 100 percent pecan meats at 25 cents a pound in 10-, 25-, and 50-pound containers. This is good news for the birds. Address the Pecano Bird Feed Company, 110 West Street, Albany, Georgia.

Our Membership Committee has been working hard and the membership has been climbing steadily. Especially gratifying has been the prompt and voluntary action of well over one hundred persons in raising their status from associate to active, or active to sustaining membership. The more funds we have, the better the *Bulletin*.

Jesse M. Shaver, Professor of Biology at George Peabody College for Teachers at Nashville, Tennessee, was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Science by Tusculum College, Greeneville, Tennessee, at their 155th Commencement on June 5, 1950. Dr. Shaver has been a member of The Wilson Ornithological Club since 1922. He served the Club as Secretary for several years, and as President from 1932 to 1934. He has been a Member of the American Ornithologists' Union since 1924, and Editor of the *Journal of the Tennessee Academy of Science* since 1928.

We regret to report the death of two prominent members of The Wilson Ornithological Club—Charles William Gustave Eifrig, who died in Windermere, Florida, November 1, 1949, at the age of 78; and Edward Russell Ford, who died in Winnetka, Illinois, January 13, 1951, at the age of 76. Professor Eifrig, an active member of the Club since 1907, was born in Doebeln, Germany and moved to America with his family when he was a child. He was a clergyman for some years, then joined the faculty of Concordia Teachers College. After 33 years of service in this institution he became Professor Emeritus. Valparaiso University conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Science in 1942. He was an active field ornithologist and published many papers on birds as well as two books on fishes, amphibians, reptiles and mammals. He was president of the Illinois Audubon Society from 1930 to 1941.

Mr. Ford was an associate member of The Wilson Ornithological Club from 1920 to 1936 and an active member from 1936 to the time of his death. He was born in Malden, Massachusetts, on December 27, 1875. He was Honorary Curator of Oölogy at the Chicago Academy of Sciences from 1931 to 1933 and Honorary Curator of Ornithology there from 1933 to the time of his death. Professionally a publisher, he continued in that business until 1928. From then on he was able to devote more time to birds. He was a keen field naturalist and fine companion. He published a number of articles about birds in *The Chicago Naturalist* and *The Audubon Bulletin*. He is best known for his senior authorship of "Birds of the Chicago Region," published in 1934 by the Chicago Academy of Sciences. His co-authors were Colin C. Sanborn and C. Blair Coursen.

Hal H. Harrison as photographer and author, M. Graham Netting as editor, *The Pennsylvania Angler* as original publisher, and the Fish Commission of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as distributor, are to be congratulated on "Pennsylvania Reptiles and Amphibians," an opus which has recently come to our desk as a 24-page brochure—all in all one of the liveliest, most informative herpetological presentations we have seen in some time. Ostensibly a picture story, the legends for the many photographs are crammed with facts. For once in their lowly lives, Pennsylvania snakes, turtles, frogs, toads, and salamanders have found good friends. As ornithologists we should rejoice that these 'other vertebrates' are receiving attention of this sort. How much of our thought have we given to reptiles and amphibians and the lives they lead? Have we not let ourselves get into the rut of indifference? Or, worse, have we not allowed ourselves to *use* these animals in attaining our own ends? How many of us have pleaded the cause of hawk protection knowing that each time we mentioned a hawk's eating of snakes

we were winning love and praise for the hawk, blame and hatred for the snakes? Such an attitude is unscientific and unfair. The time has come for us to know these 'other vertebrates' for what they are: to enjoy their beauty; to find reward in watching them; to acknowledge, deep inside ourselves, that they belong not 'under our heel,' as the saying goes, but in our world as friends and allies.

Small but highly colorful and pleasing reproductions of 24 of John James Audubon's bird paintings have been reproduced recently by the National Audubon Society as Audubon Centennial Stamps, for use in decorating letters, envelopes and packages "in order that Audubon paintings will receive during the Centennial Year [Audubon died in 1851] the public attention which they merit." We submit that there are other uses for these attractive stamps. One youngster we know has found delight in pasting them into a bird-book of her own making. Another has cut out the tiny bird figures and arranged them in a perfect circle on his own private mirror. The two sets, totalling 24 stamps, are being sold for \$1. Proceeds from the sale will be devoted to the conservation work of the Society. Address the National Audubon Society, 1000 Fifth Avenue, New York 28, New York.

Austin L. Rand, Curator of Birds at the Chicago Natural History Museum, is now visiting El Salvador where he will remain about six months conducting field studies that will serve as the basis of a semi-popular bird guide to be written in collaboration with Melvin A. Traylor, Research Associate at the Chicago Museum. The project was undertaken at the request of the Instituto Tropical de Investigaciones Cientificas, a research institute associated with the University of El Salvador, as part of a cooperative program entered upon with the Chicago Natural History Museum. Publication of the volume, in Spanish, will be undertaken by the El Salvador institution next year.

Fred T. Hall, a member of our Executive Council, and, until recently, Director of the Davenport Public Museum, has been appointed Director of the Buffalo Museum of Science. He served as Chairman of the Local Committee in charge of Arrangements for our Thirty-Second Annual Meeting in Davenport, in April.

Mr. Hall received his education at Wabash College, Crawfordsville, Indiana, where he majored in biological science, and at the Rochester Institute of Technology, where he studied art. He served for a time as head of the Biological and Anatomical Model Department of Ward's Natural Science Establishment in Rochester. His published papers deal with entomology, paleontology and ornithology. His bird paintings have been shown in many recent exhibits of ornithological art.

The editors are grateful to the following for assistance in preparing for publication the material appearing in this issue: Aaron M. Bagg, E. Alexander Bergstrom, Donald J. Borrer, William L. Brudon, Eugene Eisenmann, W. W. H. Gunn, William A. Lunk, Harold F. Mayfield, A. D. Moore, Allan R. Phillips, R. M. Strong, H. B. Tordoff, Milton B. Trautman, and J. Van Tyne. They are especially grateful to Elsa Hertz for her expert typing.

At the recent meeting of the Club, Harrison B. Tordoff was elected editor of *The Wilson Bulletin*. Manuscripts intended for publication in 1952 should be addressed to him at the Museum of Natural History, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. Correspondence concerning the 1951 volume should, however, be directed to Dr. Sutton or Dr. Berger. Dr. Sutton will teach ornithology and bird art at the University of Oklahoma Biological Station, at Lake Texoma, Willis, Oklahoma, from June 9 to August 4. Dr. Berger may be addressed at the Department of Anatomy, East Medical Building, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

In this issue of the *Bulletin* appears the first of a series of color plates based on field sketches made in México in 1938 by George Miksch Sutton. Publication of this series has been made possible through the interest and generosity of the Hilton family, of Lincoln, Nebraska. The plates, eight in all, will stand as a memorial to David Clark Hilton, celebrated physician and surgeon, who died December 12, 1945.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE WILSON ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

The Club's schedule of dues has not been changed for many years. Although printing costs have risen the quality of the *Bulletin* has been maintained because the membership has steadily climbed. Recently, however, increases in printing costs have been outstripping the Club's rate of growth. The Executive Council and the Editors are interested not only in maintaining the *Bulletin's* present high standards, but in seeing the journal substantially enlarged and improved. The program will require additional revenue.

An appropriate amendment to the Constitution was therefore proposed at the general meeting on April 27, 1951, at Davenport, Iowa. This amendment was recommended by unanimous vote of the executive council the previous day. In accordance with the Constitution and By-laws, the Council hereby asks for a mail ballot of approval. Every active member is urged to vote *yes* or *no* to this amendment by sending a letter or postcard, not later than September 1, 1951, to the Secretary, Harold Mayfield, 2557 Portsmouth Ave., Toledo 13, Ohio. The amendment reads as follows:

Effective October 1, 1951, the associate membership class (\$2.00 dues) is to be discontinued, and the subscription price of *The Wilson Bulletin* is to be \$3.00.

A LIFE MEMBER FROM CAROLINA

Elizabeth Barnhill (Mrs. Edwin O.) Clarkson was born a Texan but has lived in North Carolina all her married life. Educated as a concert pianist and organist, she has long been deeply interested in birds. With her husband she owns the beautiful, 23-year-old bird sanctuary, 'Wing Haven', a bit of which shows in our photograph. She has published a check-list of the birds of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. She is a Life Associate of the American Ornithologists' Union; a Life Member of the National Audubon Society; and a member of the Cooper Ornithological Club, the Virginia Society for Ornithology, the North Carolina Academy of Science, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She became a Life Member of the Wilson Club in 1948.

