THE MIGRANT

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL
DEVOTED TO TENNESSEE BIRDS

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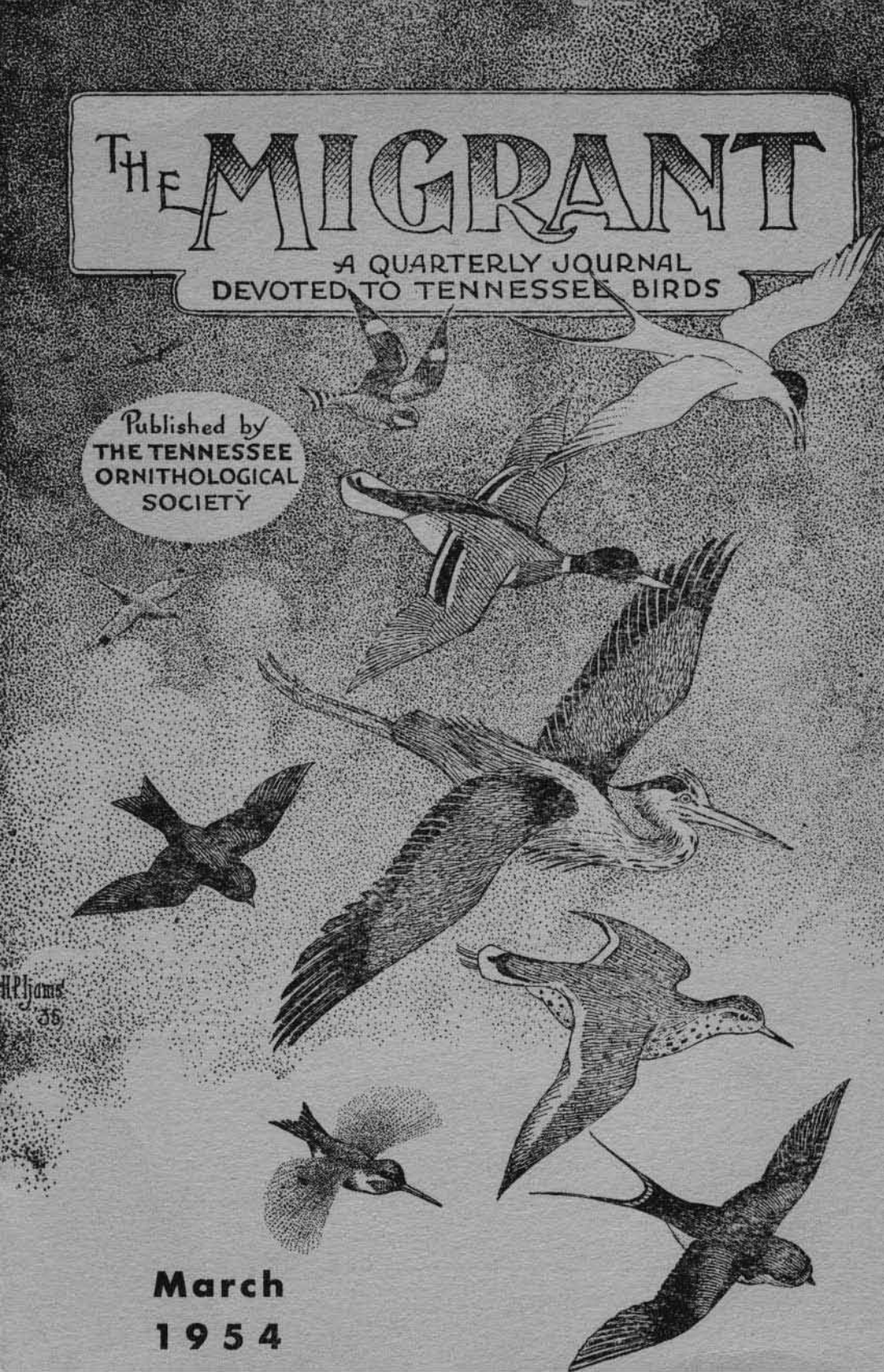

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THE MIGRANT

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GREAT BLUE HERON

Photo by Howard Barbig

Bird Names

By JAMES T. TANNER

Have you ever seen a Golden-crowned Accentor? Do you know the Bay-winged Sparrow?

Your answer will probably be "yes", if you recognize the first as an old name for the Ovenbird and the second as the Vesper Sparrow. Bird names are part of our language, and have changed just as have other parts of our language.

Our birds have two kinds of names, their common names and their scientific names. The latter are established thru a set of rules which were instituted with the aim that each species should have thru-out the world one and only one scientific name and that each name should mean only one certain species. Their common names, and it these I am concerned with, are governed by no rules except that of usage and so are a part of our language. Even common names, however, should have definite meanings, and a desirable standardization of names resulted from the work of a standing committee of the American Ornithologists' Union which has published four editions of a "Check-List" of North American birds. The fourth edition of this "Check-List", published in 1931, used names which became standard for several years among almost all ornithologists and bird students. Some changes in these names are now desirable, and some will be made in the fifth edition of this "Check-List which is being prepared. It is a matter of everyone's own opinion as to how many changes should be made. The subject is up for discussion.

One desirable change concerns the naming of species and subspecies. A species is a "kind"; the members of a species can interbreed, and typically they are all much more like each other than they are like members of any other species. In certain species the members in one geographical area differ slightly from those in other areas; the differences are usually intergrading because the members of the species can interbreed with each other. If there were complete interbreeding and mixing, the differences would disappear, but because the birds in one area are more likely to mate with birds raised in the same general area, rather than with ones from hundreds of miles away, the differences persist. When differences of this kind can be recognized, the species is divided into subspecies. As an example, the Juncos of the eastern United States are all members of one species, scientifically named **Junco hyemalis.** The Juncos found in the mountains of East Tennessee are slightly larger and grayer than those found in the northern States and Canada. The differences are recognized by placing the northern Juncos in the subspecies **Junco hyemalis hyemalis** and the southern Juncos in the subspecies **Junco hyemalis carolinensis,** the third name in each case being the "subspecific name". Between Tennessee and New York, going northwards along the Appalachians, the nesting Juncos gradually get slightly smaller and slightly browner; there is no sharp change, and so it would be impossible, except arbitrarily, to draw a line separating the two subspecies.

What has this to do with bird names? Just this: In the field we identify birds as to their species. Only exceptionally can we identify members of different subspecies without collecting the birds and examining or measuring them carefully. Because we identify birds by their species, we need common names for the species. To illustrate, a winter flock of Juncos might contain northern and southern birds; we cannot tell that by looking at them, but we can identify the species. But what shall we call them? In the fourth edition of the "Check-List", the northern subspecies was named "Slate-colored Junco", and the southern, "Carolina Junco"; no name represented the whole species. Just "Junco" would not be accurate, for there are other species, White-winged Juncos, Oregon Juncos, etc., of the western States which are distinct species. So we need a name that will apply to all members of the species.

Someone might argue that in the summer this would be no problem, for we would know that the Juncos of our mountains would be Carolina Juncos. But we do not really know that, because it is quite possible for a northern-raised bird to spend the summer with us. Furthermore, altho we are ourselves identifying the species, making a decision based on our own observations, we would be taking some other person's word that the birds of this area belong to a certain subspecies. We would be guilty of what George Sutton calls "false accuracy". For several years observers in a certain area reported Eastern Song Sparrows, this being a subspecies, until a series of Song Sparrows were collected in this area and found to be Mississippi Song Sparrows. They had identified the species correctly, but their attempt to be more accurate than they should have been led them into error.

Breeding Towhees in the vicinity of Memphis are intermediate between two subspecies (Tucker, 1950), which is not surprising because subspecies usually intergrade from one to the other. Neither "Alabama Towhee" nor "Red-eyed Towhee" would be correct for the Towhees of this area, because these are names for the slightly different birds on either side of this area, but a name that would apply to the entire species would be correct.

The desirability of having a singe common name for an entire species has become accepted in recent years. Roger Tory Peterson, in his 1947 edition of "A Field Guide to the Birds", used one name for a species, and the forthcoming edition of the A. O. U. "Check-List" is expected to do so. The choosing of the best names is not easy. Some people are traditionalists and want to use the oldest names, including the British names for species and groups that are the same on both sides of the Atlantic. Some would like to eliminate from the names of our birds all names that were transferred from European species to often unrelated species on this side of the Atlantic; names in this class are "Robin", "Warbler", and "Oriole". Others would like to discard all names which do not fit either the appearance or the habitat of the bird, names like Green Heron and Prairie Warbler. The problem is not easy and the choices are not unanimous.

Several individuals have made lists of the common names they prefer. The American Ornithologists' Union committee on nomenclature has drawn up a tentative list, and these common names were used in Murray's "Check-List" (1952) of Virginia birds. In an article in "The Chat", Messrs. Simpson, Chamberlain, and Quay (1953) have composed a list of common names they prefer for birds found in the Carolinas. I want to express my own opinion on certain names, and at the same time call the attention of MIGRANT-readers to the problem in order to get their reaction. Dr. Joseph C. Howell, University of Tennessee, has offered some suggestions about these common names. Because most bird students can refer to Peterson's "Field Guide" (1947), I will call attention to names of Tennessee birds only when there is a difference between the names used by Peterson and other names that have been or are being suggested.

Before making any comments on certain names, I will state three principles which are my guides in suggesting or opposing changes: (1) Names should be changed when it is necessary to provide a name for an entire species. (2) Names should be changed when it would eliminate confusion between the names of different species in this country (but not necessarily in the whole world, for scientific names will do that better). (3) Names should **not** be changed when they are well-established and in wide usage, not only among bird students but also among hunters, farmers, and the general public which have the same interest in these names as do bird students. Point (3) will frequently be in conflict with the other two; this is where we need discussion and compromise.

The following list of names is for species which have more than one subspecies in Tennessee or for which we have been using names belonging to subspecies rather than to the full species: Great Blue Heron, Horned Lark, Blue Jay, Loggerhead Shrike, Blue-headed Vireo, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Yellowthroat, Common Grackle, Eastern Towhee, Slate-colored Junco.

The next list has been changed from the familiar names by the addition of an adjective to identify them from similar, usually western, species: Common Nighthawk, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Eastern Kingbird, Common Raven, American Crow, Common Cowbird, American Goldfinch.

The following list consists of substitutions to make the common name more accurate, or more descriptive, or less confusing. There will be differences of opinion as to the desirabiliy of some of these: Anhinga for Water-Turkey; Common, instead of American, Merganser; Peregrine or Peregrine Falcon for Duck Hawk; Common, instead of Florida, Gallinule (Joseph Howell suggests Gray Gallinule); Ringed, instead of Semipalmated, Plover; Upland Sandpiper for Upland Plover; Dunlin for Red-backed Sandpiper; Traill's, instead of Alder, Flycatcher; Eastern Pewee, eliminating an unnecessary word; Marsh Wren, eliminating "Long-billed"; Sedge, instead of Short-billed Marsh, Wren; House, instead of English, Sparrow; Red-winged Blackbird for Red-wing.

There remains a group of birds for which new names have been suggested that are to me undesirable for one reason or another.

The spelling "Wood-Ibis" has been proposed because the bird is not a true ibis, but is a stork. Why not call it Wood Stork?

American Widgeon has been suggested to replace Baldplate, but the latter name is well established among hunters as well as bird students.

Great-crested Flycatcher has been proposed to differentiate our Crested Flycatcher from the Mexican Crested Flycatcher, but the new name is clumsy and inaccurate, the crest not being great. Common names do not need to separate all species.

The American Pipit has been renamed the Water Pipit. This name so far misses indicating the usual habitat of Pipits that it is very misleading. It is not strictly American, because it is also found in the Old-World Arctic. The name I suggest is Arctic Pipit or Northern Pipit, either of which will separate the species from Sprague's Pipit, the other pipit of our country.

Common Meadowlark has been suggested in place of Eastern Meadowlark. This will not sit well with residents of the Prairie States. "Eastern" and "Western" is descriptive of the two Meadowlarks' ranges, so let those names stand.

The five following changes that have been proposed would replace names that are established and familiar with others that fail to improve the birds' names, and the older names seem preferable. The proposed substitutions are: Swainson's, instead of Olive-backed, Thrush; Wilson's Thrush for Veery; Smalled-billed, instead of Northern, Waterthrush; Pileolated, instead of Wilson's, Warbler; Crow-Blackbird for Grackle. The suggested changes for the Waterthrush, Warbler, and Grackle are neither attractive nor especially accurate.

One particulary tough case is that of the Bachman's or Pine-woods Sparrow. Neither of these names seems appropriate, and yet no suitable alternatives have come to mind.

After more discussion we might be able to agree on a list of common names for the birds usually found in Tennessee that would serve as a standard at least until the next "Check-List" appeared. If any worthwhile discussion results from this article, it can be presented and summarized in the pages of THE MIGRANT.

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DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE, TENN.

Evening Grosbeaks In The Great Smoky Mountains and Vicinity--1951 and 1952

By ARTHUR STUPKA

The first recorded occurrence of Evening Grosbeaks (**Hesperiphona vespertina**) in Tennessee was on November 22, 1945, at Milligan College, a few miles southwest of Elizabethton and near the northeast corner of the State (Behrend, 1945). These gregarious finches remained in Elizabethton and vicinity (Tyler and Lyle, 1945), in numbers which occasionally totalled more than a hundred birds, until May 4, 1946 (Behrend, 1946 a and b). In North Carolina, where Evening Grosbeaks had not been observed since the initial records of March 1922 (Pearson, Brimley, and Brimley, p. 348), these birds appeared at five localities early in 1946 (Chamberlain, 1952c).

Five and one-half years passed during which time no Evening Grosbeaks were observed south of West Virginia. On November 17, 1951, eleven of these finches appeared near Tusculum, Greene County, Tennessee, where they remained for a few days (Irvine, 1951). On the following day, November 18, one was reported from Paris Mountain, near Greenville, South Carolina (Chamberlain, 1952a); this not only established a new bird record for that State, but proved to be the southernmost latitude to which the species had penetrated in the eastern United States. On November 28, Evening Grosbeaks were reported from Chapel Hill and on December 14 from Lenoir, N. C. (Chamberlain, 1952b); before May 7, 1952, when they were last observed in North Carolina, reports has come from approximately two dozen widely scattered localities in that State (Chamberlain, 1952b). Only in the southeastern and extreme eastern parts of North Carolina were reports entirely lacking. Flocks containing up to an estimated 500 birds were observed.

The first record of Evening Grosbeaks within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park came on December 15, 1951, when Superintendent Preston, Chief Ranger Mernin, and Ranger Morrell observed 12 to 15 in one flock on the lawn close to Park Headquarters Building, two miles south of Gatlinburg, Tenn. The flock was feeding in a place where tulip tree seeds littered the ground. Because weather conditions, along with over-population and scarcity of food, have been suggested as the factors which precipitated the invasion of these birds (Chamberlain, 1952b), it should be mentioned that the preceding month, November 1951, had been exceptionally cold, colder than any of the three winter months that followed it. On December 30 I observed one Evening Grosbeak at Newfound Gap, near the center of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park; the same day a flock of 14 was seen near Pigeon Forge, a few miles north of Gatlinburg, by three members of the Tennessee Ornithological Society.

The flock of 22 Grosbeaks which I had under observation in the park headquarters area on January 7, 1952, appears to be the only Tennessee record during that month. On February 7, 1952, Mr. Joe Manley

of Gatlinburg reported that he had just seen a flock numbering between 150 and 200 birds near the orphanage in Sevierville, Tenn., eleven miles north of Gatlinburg. He again reported the species, altho in fewer numbers, from the same vicinity on February 26 and March 10, 17, and 18, 1952. In the meantime Evening Grosbeaks appeared in Gatlinburg for the first time on February 24, when I estimated between 60 and 70 birds in a noisy flock near my house.

Beginning on March 20 and continuing thru April 16, these finches were observed in Gatlinburg by Manley and me almost daily, in numbers varying from one to approximately 150 birds. The largest flocks were seen on April 1 and 2 when I estimated between 80 and 90 birds and on April 4 and 14 thru 16 when Manley estimated 150 birds. Thereafter we had but two 1952 records: on April 27 when Dr. W. W. H. Gunn and Mr. D. S. Miller of Toronto, Ontario, reported three birds, and on May 4 when Mrs. Joe Manley reported seven, both localities being in the Gatlinburg area.

The only remaining record for the State of Tennessee is that of 17 Grosbeaks observed near Harriman from late February to March 1 and again from April 3 to 27, 1952 (West).

Up to the winter of 1889-90, when a great eastern migration of Evening Grosbeaks occurred, the species was almost unknown in the eastern states. Early in 1890 these birds had spread almost to the coast of Massachusetts (Forbush, vol. 3, p. 4) and appeared in Maine for the first time (Palmer, p. 527). After the winter of 1910-11, when another great flight took place, these finches appeared somewhere in New England every year (Forbush, vol. 3, p. 4). In North Carolina they were first observed in 1922 (Pearson, Brimley, and Brimley, p. 348); at Cape May, N. J., in 1930 (Stone, p. 887); in Virginia in 1940 (Murray, p. 104); in Tennessee (Behrend, 1945) and Newfoundland (Peters and Burleigh, p. 371) in 1945; and in South Carolina in 1951 (Chamberlain, 1952a). Should this trend continue, and there appears to be no good reason why it should not do so, it will be of interest to learn how deep into the southeastern states these unpredictable birds will penetrate during our lifetime.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
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Harry Pearle Ijams, 1876-1954

When one has come to know a friend thru long years of close association, to have spent congenial hours afield with him in the study of birds, and to have noted his spirit of helpfulness to others, it is with keen regret that we must finally record his passing. These I am sure are the sentiments of all who knew Harry Ijams, especially those who shared with him his love of birds and who had known the hospitality of "Island Home", the sanctuary he and Mrs. Ijams had created on the Tennessee River above Knoxville.

"H. P.", as his friends called him, was born in Knoxville July 20, 1876, and was therefore well past 77 when he died on Jan. 12, 1954. He was a commercial artist by profession, first in business for himself and later a staff artist for "The Knoxville News-Sentinel."

The Great Smokies were his favorite camping and recreation place and he knew the region well. When the National Park there was first projected, he assisted enthusiastically in the campaign, with posters, cartoons and cartographic maps of the area. The writer had known H. P. thru correspondence as early as 1919, but came to know him well when he became one of a party of five, organized by the writer in 1924, to make a further survey of the birdlife of the Smokies' mountain tops. Camp was made on Siler's Bald, from May 29 to June 5, and the results were published later. Subsequent trips were made to Mt. LeConte and to Eldorado ("Elrado") and H. P. recalled these rough trips often in his later years.

Island Home from the beginning was the rallying point for the Knoxville T.O.S. chapter, for there all bird students were made to feel thoroughly at home in the attractive grounds. Spring Field Day there was the big event of the year and the "century mark" of 100 species was often passed the first Sunday in May. The Ijams home held a good library of bird books and in an adjacent building was maintained for many years a small museum of mounted birds and mammals. Nesting boxes were well distributed thruout the grounds, chiefly of a unique design that he had perfected.

H. P. was elected President of the T.O.S. in 1932 and has been a frequent contributor of articles to this magazine. We are indebted to

him for the attractive cover of THE MIGRANT which has been in use for a number of years. The T.O.S., and especially the Knoxville group, will always cherish recollections of Harry Ijams. I have requested some of his long-time friends to add a word to this brief sketch and these follow below.—ALBERT F. GANIER.

Harry Ijams was the authority thru whom those interested in Nature in the Knoxville area checked their lore and made many acquaintances of kindred interests. Even before I knew him personally, I felt his influence, for whether making trips across the mountains or canoeing to Chattanooga, I found I was following trails blazed by him and Arthur Ogden year before. Later I came to know him as the kindly nature teacher who, with his gracious wife, made me and other young nature lovers feel we were actually an asset to his home while he devoured his food in fancied exchange of trivial labors performed in such things as making swimming pools for us to swim in.—BROCKWAY CROUCH.

Thirty years ago this coming May I met Harry Ijams on a bird expedition into the high Smokies. From the very first meeting he impressed me as an enthusiastic, persistent and accurate observer of birds. All our associations since then, at his beloved Island Home and elsewhere in Tennessee, have only confirmed this first impression. To him, more than to any other person, is due the success of the Knoxville Chapter. And from Island Home, the gracious home where "H. P." and Alice Ijams lived have radiated influences which bless and brighten the lives of their many friends.—G. R. MAYFIELD.

The Ijams' sanctuary welcomed friends and visitors, scouts and students, as well as birds. Entering it, one felt removed spiritually, as well as physically, from the busy routine of life. For beyond Mr. Ijams' interest in ornithology was a great love for the birds themselves, which they appeared to sense. Prothonotary Warblers, ordinarily of retiring habit, nested year after year over the lily pool a few feet from his front door. Mr. Ijams' delightful humor and spirit of hospitality will continue to be an inspiration to all who knew him.—MRS. ROBERT A. MONROE.

New T. O. S. Chapter In Chattanooga

A new chapter, the Chattanooga Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society, was officially recognized on March 10, 1954. Mrs. Robert A. Monroe of Knoxville, President of the T. O. S., welcomed the chapter at a supper meeting, and then gave an illustrated talk on bird identification.

The officers of the new chapter are: Mrs. Eugene M. West, president; Dr. Wilbur K. Butts, vice-president; Mrs. Leon F. Cross, treasurer; Mrs. Stanley Barr, secretary; Miss Mabel Norman, historian. Much of the credit for the new chapter must go to Mrs. West, who last year organized the group as the Chattanooga Bird-Study Club.

The chapter has scheduled regular field trips and evening programs. The older chapters wish it the best of success!

The Round Table

BIRD CASUALTIES AT SMYRNA AIRPORT.—On the night of October 5, 1953, eighteen birds were picked up by the writer near the base of the ceilometer at the U. S. Army Air Base near Smyrna, Tenn. This was a minor casualty list compared with similar occurrences which happened on Sept. 9-10, 1948, and on Oct. 7-8, 1951 (MIGRANT, 20: 9-12 and 22: 57-60), but data secured on this occasion is of interest in solving the mystery of why birds attracted by these lights are sometimes killed.

The night of Oct. 5 brought in a cold front of medium intensity, being accomplished by a light wind from the northwest and light rain at dusk. The clouds (the "ceiling") were low until shortly after midnight. Data on ceiling, wind, and temperatures were as follows: 10 p.m., (900 ft., NW 13, 60 degrees F.); 11 p.m. (1100 ft., N-NW 13, and 60); mid-night (1100 ft., N-NW 8, and 59); 1 a.m. (3700 ft., NW 11, and 58); 2 a.m., skies had cleared and birds no longer present.

Shortly after midnight the Nashville Airport phoned Mrs. Amelia Laskey, Mrs. Katherine Goodpasture and the writer that many birds were about the ceilometer light there and we went out to investigate. The number had decreased somewhat when we arrived but many birds were still to be seen flying about as well as heard. Only one dead bird was found but another brushed our clothing in flight and passed on. As the sky cleared we left, there being few birds in evidence.

The writer then drove ten miles southeast, to the Smyrna location referred to, and found that conditions there also had become normal. Looking about for dead birds, he found 15 that were dead and 3 still alive. They were on the concrete paving (a few on grass) and were all on the southeast side of the ceilometer, from 40 to 100 feet away. It is believed that they all fell within 2 or 3 hours prior to midnight, when the ceiling was very low. The species found were as follows: Red-eyed Vireo, 2; Ovenbird, 4; Tennessee Warbler, 7; Myrtle Warbler, 2; Chestnut-sided Warbler, 1; Magnolia Warbler, 1; and Bay-breasted Warbler, 1.

The cause of the fatalities is not chargeable to any lethal component of the intense light beam, because birds have been repeatedly seen to fly thru it without falling. The probable explanation is that birds, flying under the low cloud ceiling, are attracted to the light in or near their path, that many low-flying ones which fly thru the beam are temporarily blinded and, losing their sense of direction and altitude, strike the paving before they know they are dangerously close to the ground. —ALBERT F. GANIER, Nashville 12, Tennessee.

CEILOMETER AND OTHER INDICATIONS OF NOCTURNAL MIGRATION, MEMPHIS, OCTOBER, 1953—At 7:45 p.m. on Oct. 5, 1953, J. S. Hursh telephoned me from the Municipal Airport to advise that birds were fluttering in the ceilomter beam. On duty with him at that time in the U. S. Weather Bureau office were Robert Grace and Arthur Kline. Fortunately, weather conditions were relatively mild, otherwise, since the

migration appeared heavy, another avian disaster could have resulted, similar to those described in THE MIGRANT for March 1949 and December 1951. Mrs. Coffey and I remained at the airport from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. while Mrs. Elizabeth Barton and Lawrence Kent were present from 10 to 10:30 p.m.

The surface winds were from the north and northwest, at 10 to 15 miles per hour; at 3000 feet altitude the velocity (9:30 p.m.) was 25 miles per hour. The temperature was 59°F at 7 p.m., to 60° at 11 p.m., following a daytime high of 71°. At 7:15 p.m. when the birds were first noted the ceiling was 700 feet, changing to 1200 feet at 8 p.m., 3500 feet at 9 and 9:30 with scattered light clouds at 1300 feet, 4000 feet at 10 p.m., 4200 feet at 10:30, 9000 feet at 11 p.m., 13,000 at 11:20 (birds estimated passing then at 2500 to 3000 feet) and gone at 11:40 p.m.

In the upper part of the beam could be seen many fluttering birds and/or insects—it was impossible to tell which, even with 7x50 binoculars. Kent reported the presence, at 10 p.m., of three Nighthawks, which from their actions were evidently feeding on insects. We found a large sphinx moth resting on the base of the light. Occasionally, at a height of about 100 to 200 feet we could see the body and beating wings of various small birds which often came back near the beam after short arcs of circling. A Solitary Sandpiper was noted around the light for some time, at a height of 60 to 100 feet, the tail pattern as well as size and shape being discernible. I started to tally the "chips" heard for time periods but because of the circling noted, dropped the idea. Many more were heard at 9 p.m. then when we arrived at 8:30. Some seemed to be passing directly over without noticeable pause, including a Black-crowned Night Heron and a Green Heron heard.

Returning to Coffey Grounds, five miles north and a mile west, I made a listening check to ascertain if there was a good migration going over or whether a relatively small number of circling birds at the beam gave that impression. At 1 p.m. at least two birds a minute were heard, indicating many birds were passing, and at 11 p.m. they were still moving. A Black-crowned Night Heron was heard each time.

The ceilometer is located on the south edge of the airport near the west side, with a heavily traveled, wide road outlining these two sides. To the north lie grassy areas and runways. To the south, across the road was a cottonfield. Before work the next day Mrs. Coffey and I searched for birds from 7:10 to 7:50 a.m. North of the light she found a huddled Red-eyed Vireo which was released, in fair condition, later that day. Crossing to the southeast, the direction that wind should have carried any exhausted bird, I moved south on a gravelled road and found on it a dead Chestnut-sided Warbler, about 250 yards SSE from the ceilometer, then 30 yards farther, a dead Red-eyed Vireo. The cotton field, south of the light, was a poor place to look for small birds, but during a zigzag traverse I found a dead Oven-bird, slightly over 200 yards SSW. Based on these limited findings I would estimate casualties at 10 to 20 birds.

That same October 6 morning two dead warblers were found in downtown Memphis, one just north of the Post Office and one two blocks east.

A. L. Meyer brought in a Magnolia while Mrs. T. I. Klyce reported hers as unknown. If it had been possible then to get a report on any others so found, there would have been a meagre comparison of uptown with ceilometer casualties, under lightly disastrous conditions. Such a request was carried, two evenings later, thru the courtesy of Eldon Roark, in his widely read column of the "Memphis Press-Scimitar." This brought me another Magnolia, apparently dead in the early night, and found 7 a.m. Oct. 15 on a Court Square sidewalk by Frank G. Knight. Above there in an 18th story office I identified a Magnolia which Charles Crump then chased out a window, having given up the task the night before when the bird was first noted. This would indicate a migration Oct. 14-15.

On the evening of Oct. 23 when our "Moon Watch" was clouded out, Lawrence Kent checked the ceilometer 7:55 to 8:20 p.m. but no birds were in evidence. None were heard then at home. At 8:58 p.m., Oct. 27, a small number of Blue or Snow Geese were heard near home. The previous night "geese" were reported over the Glenview area to Oliver Irwin.

During the period when we sat at the telescope, watching for passages between us and the full moon, migration was apparently light three nights, increasing on two nights. On Oct. 19, 16 passages were noted in 2¾ hours, while on Oct. 20, 63 were noted from 7 to 11:30. Oct. 21-22, 22 were recorded 8:29 to 2:00, with 1½ hours lost because of clouds. Over 90 passages each night were noted Oct. 22-23, 7:25 to 3:12, and Oct. 24-25, 8:36 to 1:00, the larger part before 10:30 p.m. Oct. 23 was cloudy early and schedules cancelled. There was no radical change in weather conditions during the six-day period.—BEN B. COFFEY, JR., 672 North Belvedere Boulevard, Memphis, Tenn.

A YELLOW RAIL AT NASHVILLE.—On October 15, 1953, a bird of this species was captured in the suburbs of Nashville by a Mr. Sternheim who gave it to Mr. Jim Robins who in turn gave it to me. It was alive when caught but died shortly after and was prepared by me as a study skin for my collection. The bird was a young of the year, with wing measurement of 3.15 inches, and had lost its tail feathers. This is the first record of this species for Tennessee.

At Baton Rouge, La., these little rails are regularly captured in the fall when the hay fields are mowed in late October. It has been found to occur in Arkansas at the same time, when the rice fields are cut.—ALBERT F. GANIER, Nashville 12, Tenn.

SAW-WHET OWL WINTERING NEAR NASHVILLE, 1952-1953.—A Saw-whet Owl (**Aegolius acadia**) was found perched about six feet from the ground on a small lower limb of a beech tree in Basin Spring woods, near Nashville, Tenn., on Dec. 6, 1952. The brown stripes of its breast were a nearly perfect protective coloring against the twisted brown leaves. It was roosting on the same perch the following day, and again sat quietly while observers stood and talked within four or five feet.

The true identity of the owl was not suspected, however, until Dec. 11, when Mrs. Laskey at first glance said, "That little owl doesn't have horns, does it?" To her goes full credit for its identification. As before it sat without flying while careful observation continued.

It was missing Dec. 13, but was present again on Dec 17 and 18, when Mrs. Laskey and I made an unsuccessful attempt to catch and band the the owl. After Dec. 18 no further evidence of the owl was seen until Jan. 14 when fresh whitewash and a fresh pellet were found under the original perch; the same was found on Feb. 3. Since the owl seemed to be still in the woods but to have deserted the beech tree for a roost elsewhere, a search for its new roosting site was started. On Feb. 21 a white-wash marked cedar tree was located, beneath which 21 pellets were collected. Even tho the owl was not in the cedar, I hoped I had found a favorite roosting tree. Two days later, Feb. 23, there sat the Saw-whet about twelve feet from the ground close to the trunk. It was present in this cedar on six additional dates and was absent only once thru March 8, after which it was not seen. From Dec. 6 thru March 8 the owl was positively recorded on twelve dates in all.

During this interval a total of 69 pellets was collected. The pellets were somewhat variable in size. Those examined closely seemed to be composed entirely of remains of small mammals. As far as I know, this is the first series of records on the wintering of a Saw-whet Owl in this section.

On March 1, 1936, Ben Coffey and others at Memphis were able to study a Saw-whet at close range (Migrant, 7: 19. 1936). Mrs. Laskey banded one which was caught March 16, 1940, by high school boys in East Nashville (Auk, 58: 96. 1941). A. F. Ganier secured from Mr. Sedberry of Thompson Station a mounted specimen said to have been taken locally during the winter of 1943 (Migrant, 17: 67-68. 1946). Thompson Station is about 13 miles south of Basin Spring. On the basis of song records at night, Arthur Stupka has established the Saw-whet Owl as a regular summer resident and a most likely breeding species of the Great Smoky Mountains (Migrant, 17: 60-62. 1946). —KATHERINE A. GOODPASTURE, 408 Fairfax Ave., Nashville, Tenn.

HOUSE WREN NESTING SURVEY IN UPPER EAST TENNESSEE, 1953.—For the second season the Elizabethton Chapter of the T. O. S. has sponsored a nesting survey of House Wrens (**Troglodytes aedon**), inviting the other chapters of East Tennessee to participate. Altho the area was not covered as thoroly as we had hoped, the results reported are very gratifying.

It appears that in areas where the count was repeated from the previous year, that the species is holding its own or increasing. The count was conducted on July 12 except for Kingsport where the period of counting was from July 12 to 19, taken in conjunction with a census of summer bird residents. Mrs. Anne H. Switzer reported for the Kingsport Club a total of 25 nests in two residential areas containing about 30 lawns in the northeast section of Kingsport. Most of them occupied boxes

provided for them, and it is the opinion of the Kingsport group that anyone in that area who puts up a properly constructed wren box can have House Wrens in residence.

Mrs. Hugo Doob, Jr., reported three nesting pairs from Johnson City: Oakland Gardens, Boone St. across from Memorial Hospital, and 606 Franklin St.

Robert Herndon and the writer covered practically all of Elizabethton during the early morning of July 12, and located three nesting pairs all in the vicinity of Pine Hill Road extension just outside the city limits. Upon returning from the trip about noon, we found a House Wren in the gathering cage of my double-S trap. It was banded and released.

Dickie Hughes assisted in making the plans and carrying out the census.

We approve of the suggestion of the Kingsport group that the census be conducted over a longer period. We propose another House Wren nesting survey this summer, and are setting the dates July 10 thru 19. We earnestly solicit the assistance of all who live within the nesting range of this species in Tennessee which would include the area between Knoxville and Bristol. You are urged to put up suitable nesting boxes as early as convenient. If any individual or group would be interested in assisting with this project, please contact the writer.—LEE R. HERNDON, 1533 Burgie Place, Elizabethton, Tenn.

The Season

MEMPHIS—September continued hot and dry, with about normal temperatures until February which averaged 6° above normal. Cold periods, low 16° to 19°, were Dec. 18, 23, and 24, and Jan. 11-13. The first rain since July 21 came Oct. 26 and monthly averages became almost normal by virtue of few but heavy rains. However, January precipitation was high (almost 4" snow and sleet) and as a result, ducks, low in species and numbers at Christmas time, became more common. During low stages, Edward Wooldridge reported 200 White Pelicans, Nov. 1, at Horseshoe Lake, Ark., and Rev. Wm. Hearn 100 American Egrets, Nov. 16, at Sardis Lake, Miss. On Sept. 27 at Pocket Lake near Cold Creek (Ft. Pilow Area) over 500 Wood Ibises were seen by Ed Attebury. Two adult Bald Eagles were noted Sept. 26, at Lakeview by Lee Grimmig who also found a Long-eared Owl (shot) on Dec. 24, four miles west of Blackfish Lake, Ark. Two Golden Plovers were at the Penal Farm, Nov. 8, and a Woodcock at Coffey Grounds, Nov. 12. Caspian Terns were seen on Lake McKellar (Tenn. Chute): 1, Sept. 12, (Hearn) and 6, Sept. 21, (George Peyton). A Yellow-billed Cuckoo with injured wing was found in a park, Dec. 9 (brought to J. E. Jolly). The last flock of Chimney Swifts noted were 500 on Oct. 22. The fall swallow migration was generally poor near Memphis; however, 75 Trees (usually abundant), 350 Barns, and 125 Cliffs were seen Oct. 18 at Lonoke, Ark., fish hatchery (Alice Smith, Mrs. Coffey). A House Wren was found near Raleigh on

Oct. 31 and Nov. 28 but not Dec. 27 or Jan. 24. Short-billed Marsh Wrens were in weedy meadows along the Lakeview levee: 4, Aug. 8; 16, Aug. 23; and 2, Aug. 29. No nests could be found. This was our nearest approach to the record numbers of Aug. 9, 1936. (Migrant, 7:38, 1936 and 13: 12-13, 1942); We often fail to find this species there in the fall.

George Peyton reports a good warbler migration, even in an average city back yard. A Yellow-breasted Chat was trapped at Coffey Grounds, Dec. 3 (LC), and released Dec. 4 (BC). The Western Meadowlark appeared at the Penal Farm Nov. 1 with about three present since then; we have been unable to locate it elsewhere in W. Tenn. Regularly found near Lonoke, Ark., this season we also found the species Nov. 29 west of Walls and north of Friars Point, Miss., but not on Mar. 7. A female Rose-breasted Grosbeak was seen Oct. 31 near Raleigh. At the old Dyersburg Army Air Base, Halls, I saw 4 Tree Sparrows, Dec. 13. (Capt. Burt Monroe kindly write me that the species was not recorded there in 1943 and 1944). The Charles Seahorns at Germantown report our earliest ever White-throated Sparrows, 3 on Oct. 1, while White-crowned Sparrows (3) were first seen there Oct. 7. — BEN B. COFFEY, JR., Memphis, Tenn.

NASHVILLE—Fall brought the usual species of winter residents, but in somewhat smaller numbers. Our very dry weather during the summer and well into the migration season caused a noticeable shortage of wild berries and other foods which attract birds. Some interesting discoveries were made during this period: a Virginia Rail was found at the edge of the city Sept. 22; a Sora Rail was killed on the Franklin Road Oct. 1; a Short-eared Owl was shot in Donelson Oct. 30.

Mrs. Amelia Laskey's banding records indicate that the Mockingbird has again reached normal numbers in the Nashville area, the first time since the disastrous ice storm of 1951; she banded 56 individuals at her home station between Aug. 14 and Oct. 20.

On the Nashville Christmas Count the all-time high for species count was tied. But there appeared to be a scarcity of a few species: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Field Sparrow, Myrtle Warbler, Goldfinch, and Red-bellied Woodpecker. Unusuals for the winter season were: Harris Sparrow (KAG), reported on the Christmas Count; 2 Least Sandpipers at Jackson Lake the middle of December (GWM and AOA) and again on the Christmas Count; a Short-eared Owl in Buena Vista Marsh again, the second consecutive winter, observed by several different groups and last seen on Dec. 27; a Brown Thrasher in Bell's Bend Nov. 14 and Dec. 27; a Barn-Owl in Bell's Bend Nov. 14; 4 Phoebes, a Brown Thrasher, and a Sharp-shinned Hawk were seen (DO) at Wartrace on Dec. 26.

Sizable flocks of ducks, from 25 to 60, have been seen at Radnor Lake at intervals from the last of January until the date of this report, most noteworthy being 3 Old Squaws, first observed on Jan. 27 (JO, EG) and still present Feb. 5.

One roost in the vicinity of Nashville has been under observation. It is in a thickly populated residential area used for the second consecu-

tive winter by Starlings, Robins, a few Grackles, and fewer Cowbirds and Red-wings. Starlings were at their peak Jan. 19, estimated 200,000, while Robins were at their peak on Feb. 9, estimated 140,000.

Interesting Spring notes are as follows: Singing Phoebes in Warner Park on Feb. 21 (ARL); a banded Brown Thrasher returned to Mrs. Laskey's station on Mar. 1; a Horned Lark's nest with two eggs in their usual breeding territory (KAG) on March 7; this proved to be the complete clutch.—SUE M. BELL, Nashville.

KNOXVILLE—Interesting fall records were an immature Blue Goose on Nov. 27 (Lorenz), a Florida Gallinule on Oct. 18; a single Nighthawk on Oct. 19 (Overton) which is late for this species; 6 Long-billed Marsh Wrens and 3 Short-billed Marsh Wrens on Sept. 26 (JTT) in rushes bordering Loudon Lake; a Grasshopper Sparrow on Nov. 8 (JCH); and a Lincoln's Sparrow seen on a TOS field trip in the Gallaher Ferry district.

Winter temperatures were lower than during the past two years, being about average. There were no exceedingly cold spells nor bad storms. Very few observations of birds were made that seem unusual or significantly different from the average. A few Red-breasted Nuthatches were seen in October, but none have been reported since then. There have been small numbers of Purple Finches and no Siskins. White-crowned Sparrows have been seen more regularly than in the past. Ducks have been few and rather irregular, the most unusual being 9 White-winged Scoters seen near Concord by R. Lorenz.

Purple Martins were reported on March 1, the day of the heaviest snowfall of the winter; this was followed by cold weather and the arrival of other Martins has been delayed.—JAMES T. TANNER, Knoxville.

GREENEVILLE—The past season, colder than recent winters, remained mostly dry, with a February rain and a March 1 snow.

Purple Finches, not reported until November 24, were afterwards seen frequenty thru-out the winter, as were Cedar Waxwings and Robins. The one Red-breasted Nuthatch was seen in the fall. Horned Larks in a wintering flock of around 70 birds have been present since Nov. 11. Lark song was heard Nov. 2, 6, and 24, and again Feb. 26; on at least the earlier dates it was from a lark frequenting the slope on which a pair spent last nesting season. Five Tree Sparrows, seen by Richard Nevius on Dec. 28, were reported in the 1953 Christmas Count.

Early interest in nesting materials was shown Jan. 8, when a female Cardinal and a male English Sparrow carried materials for short distance. Carolina Wrens carried materials Feb. 25 and Mar. 12, and Bluebirds noisily investigated nesting sites on Feb. 15 when warm weather suddenly arrived. On March 15 Richard Nevius found a Black Vulture incubating.

Accompanying the Feb. 15 heat which reached 70 degrees during the day, Mockingbirds, Phoebes, Doves, and Cardinals sang riotously. Cardinals had been previously heard Feb. 1, Mockingbirds and Phoebes not

at all. Doves had cooed briefly Feb. 13 and 14. Field Sparrows at scattered points came into song Feb. 18. A deep snowfall on March 1 checked bird activity, but only for a few days.

The mid-February arrival of weather from southward carried with it early migrants. A Grackle, heard Feb. 14, was just ahead of the heat; by February 16 Grackle flocks were here. Five Red-wings on Feb. 16 were the first seen since Nov. 28. On Feb. 17 came the first large flock of Robins, about 100. On March 8 thru 12 Alfred Irvine had up to 50 American Pipits following his tractor as he plowed. — RUTH REED NEVIUS, Greeneville.

KINGSPORT—Warm dry weather marked our autumn. From Sept. 25, when we had a shower, until Oct. 27 no rain fell, and our first frost was delayed until Nov. 7. For the second time the Kingsport Bird Club conducted a fall census. We listed only 59 species compared to 71 for 1952. The weather was mild with no snow until March 1. Small flocks of Robins were more abundant than usual. Perhaps because of the open winter, our winter visitors did not find it necessary to feed at stations. At any rate there seemed to be a scarcity of Juncos, White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows, Horned Larks, Snipe, Siskins, and Purple Finches.

The number of species of waterfowl observed here during the fall and winter continues to increase. During this past winter we have seen American Golden-eye (first observed very early, Oct. 18), Wood Duck on Nov. 1, Bufflehead on Nov. 25, and Baldpate. A flock of the latter varying from 12 to 27 have been seen associated with Lesser Scaup at the local fish hatchery during the last of February and the first of March.

As spring approaches we have recorded a few unusually early observations. Tom Finucane saw Fox Sparrows during the first two weeks of March, our only record since January of 1950. Also early are dates for Pigeon Hawks observed by Mr. Finucane on March 3 and 7. The first date for Chipping Sparrow this year is March 9.—ANN HARNEY SWITZER, Kingsport.

ELIZABETHTON—The winter has averaged 4 or 5 degrees colder than any for the past ten years. The rainfall in January exceeded 7 inches while for December it was about normal and for February about half of normal. Snowfall was very light until the night of Feb. 28 when we had between 10 and 12 inches in this area. Considerable damage was done to trees and shrubbery.

On Dec. 19 Roby May and the writer observed at least 6 Northern Horned Larks in a flock of more than 150 Prairie Horned Larks at the County Farm. Horned and Pied-bill Grebes have been present in this area all winter, this being the first winter records of Horned Grebes. Mallard, Black Ducks, and Buffleheads have been present in appreciable numbers all winter. An Old Squaw and female Golden-eye were first observed on Wilbur Lake by the Brownings on Jan. 17; the Old Squaw has been present since that date.

The following are noteworthy records for the season: 2 Blue-winged Teal on Feb. 10 near Milligan (Mrs. J. C. Browning and Mrs. D. E. Bashor); a total of 7 Ring-necked Ducks on Wilbur and Watauga Lakes, Feb. 13 (Roby May, LHR); a male Redhead on Wilbur Lake, March 7 (Brownings); 3 Herring Gulls on Watauga Lake, Jan. 24 (Lois Herndon, LRH); Wilson's Snipe near Franklin Club, March 3 (LRH); a pair of Woodcock, absent from this area for the past two seasons, first observed in their courtship flight on March 8 (RDM, LRH); Red-winged Blackbird on Feb. 15 (Mrs. J. C. Browning); Rusty Blackbirds on Feb. 21 (Brownings); Cowbirds and Savannah Sparrow on Feb. 27 (RDM, LRH). LEE R. HERNDON, Elizabethton.

Book Review

BIRDS OF MEXICO, A Guide for Field Identification. By Emmett Reid Blake. University of Chicago Press, $6.00.

Only shortly removed from us and our neighbors lies Texas, and beyond is an almost new world for the bird student. In recent years the practicability of a Mexican vacation has increased manyfold, but the bird student has been under a handicap in learning the wealth of temperate and tropical bird life there. We owe Dr. Blake a debt of gratitude for bringing us the first comprehensive handbook on the birds of Mexico. Listed within its 644 pages are 967 species, of which it is stated over 80 are endemic to Mexico and some 400 others do not extend beyond its northern border. The Collared Aracari is illustrated by the lone colored plate, while 329 species are shown in line drawings by Douglas E. Tibbitts, also of the Chicago Natural History Museum staff. For those who like to use keys, most of the 89 families are given one. Diagnostic field marks are given for each species, with its range in Mexico and brief pertinent remarks.

A copy became available in May, 1953, just before our fifth vacation trip down the Inter-American Highway and it simplified our studies considerably, especially at the end of the line for which we had no published lists. For those on a first trip it will be a godsend. The two Peterson guides and Pough's guides will still be needed, and Sturgis' **Field Books of Birds of the Panama Canal Zone** can help. Our original notebooks, from study of museum skins, can now be mostly dispensed with (except for our added notes on calls and songs) but our Kodachrome slides of museum skins will continue to assist, covering a void in the book.

Naturally the handbook is weakest in description of songs and calls and a shortage of field experience peeps thru at times. But the tremendous contribution that it will make is to stimulate and assist in developing further information on identification, range, and natural history of these birds, represented for up to a century in the museums of the world. The serious amateur should certainly appreciate an available standard for nomenclature and a scientific order or arrangement

of the species. Different vernacular names and different sequences were used by various authors and often the same author used a different name in a later list. One kingbird we now know by four names. With the advent of Blake's book we had to learn new names for about 150 species. But new adventurers across the border can start fresh while past students now have a standard to follow.

Of interest locally is a foretaste of projected changes in "common" or vernacular names. Considerable time and study were evidently given this vexing question and we see the fine hand of our friend, Gene Eisenmann, apparent in its handling. We were listeners to discussions at meetings of the Linnaean Society of New York and refer you to "The Wilson Bulletin", 58 (4): 210-215, December, 1946, for some of the whys and wherefores. Where we might differ on certain names, someone else would differ only on others and it is the task of "the authority" to set a suitable standard. But, with a reviewer's prerogative we inject just a few of our thoughts. Here, I shudder to even think of referring to our state bird as the "Common" Mockingbird. Altho there are reasons for descriptive names rather than using men's names, still if there is an Audubon's Warbler, there should be a Wilson's Warbler rather than a Pileolated Warbler. Even the cover of "The Wilson Bulletin" should protest. Melodious Blackbird is certainly a happy choice for this attractive Mexican species, but if I hadn't found it as Sumichrast's Blackbird originally, would I have been interesed in learning something about Father Sumichrast and his work? We do owe these early ornithologists a memorial "name". Possibly we would get as big a thrill out of seeing a "brush-finch" as an "atlapetes", — the former gives an idea of the relationship of several interesting species, the latter seems more exotic. Some day we may have Mexican bird-hobbyists to a greater extent than now; the name "atlapetes" might have been a vernacular name common to both our languages.

A tremendous amount of work and study has made this book available to us. Turn your thoughts, if not your steps, southward!—BEN B. COFFEY, JR.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE ANNUAL MEETING

The 1954 annual meeting of the T. O. S. will be held at Standing Stone State Park, near Livingston, Tenn., on May 8 and 9. Rooms and meals may be had at the park; reservations for these, stating the numbers, should be made by May 1 with Mrs. R. A. Monroe, 1424 Tugaloo Drive, Knoxville 16, Tenn.

Members arriving Saturday a.m. should bring their own lunch for that day. Saturday dinner ($1.00), Sunday breakfast (65c), and Sunday dinner at noon ($1.50) will be served at the park. The schedule includes the directors' meeting Saturday afternoon, field trips Saturday afternoon, a program after the Saturday dinner, and field trips on Sunday. Standing Stone State Park is a good place for birds.