

COMMUNICATION

To the Editors of THE CONDOR:

From the standpoint of the rarer birds, one of the greatest desiderata is a League for the Extermination of Amateur Ornithologists. I do not mean mere bird-lovers or "bird-chasers"—in *their* increase lies the birds' best hope—nor the professional ornithologist, who is a necessary minor evil. I refer to the man who collects bird-skins or eggs as a boy collects stamps; who is sure death to any rare bird that crosses his path, because he wants it either to complete his set or to trade. This includes the "no specimen, no record" man, who will sacrifice anything that flies for the satisfaction of clinching his claim to an unimportant record. It goes without saying that the ban should cover that noxious by-product of the accumulating instinct, the collector for revenue only, who ethically occupies a far lower position than the ordinary market hunter. I know, of course, that the number of birds and eggs that the amateur destroys is small in comparison with those that fall victims to natural agencies, but the latter are not supposed to be open to conviction.

Moreover, in the case of a rare bird, the collector becomes a relatively far more important influence in the process of extermination; and where a declining species is undergoing a sectional re-adjustment to changed conditions, he may well be the factor that turns the scale toward extinction.

So it is to be hoped that in the near future the man who collects bird-skins or eggs for private gratification or gain will be classed with the plume-hunter and be banished from respectable ornithological society.

To the hardened collector, this will of course seem like idle chatter, but it is written with the hope that it may appeal to some who are not too far gone in evil ways.

Yours sincerely,

H. GIFFORD,

Omaha, Nebraska, January 5, 1917.

[The above does not, of course, in any degree represent the views of the Editors of THE CONDOR. We give it space for the reason that it well represents the particular angle of view of the extreme bird-protectionist, the person whose field of vision is narrowed until he can see optimum good only in the conservation of each and every *individual* bird. He does not seem to realize that with the extermination of the *amateur* ornithologist, *scientific* ornithology is doomed to die out inside of one generation!—Editors.]

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

THE BIOLOGICAL SURVEY BIRD ENUMERATIONS.—The United States Biological Survey has recently issued its "Second Annual Report of Bird Counts in the United States, with Discussion of Results."¹ This has to do with the season of 1915. The method of securing data was practically the same as used in 1914, and upon which the "preliminary report" (Bulletin 187, U. S. Dept. Agric.) was based. A circular of detailed instructions was issued to those persons who responded to the general call for volunteer observers. A total of 315 reports for 1915 was received, covering every state in the Union except Utah and Nevada.

In summarizing, emphasis is placed upon the concordance of results of the 1915 enumeration with those of 1914. This would appear to establish an average, in the north-eastern United States, of 124 breeding pairs of birds on the average farm of 108 acres. The censuses further indicate that there is an average smaller number of birds per unit of area throughout the region west of the 100th meridian than there is in the eastern states; but no exact numerical statement is yet attempted.

Increase in bird population is observed on those farms or grounds where special pains have been taken to provide increased food, shelter, and protection from enemies.

One feature of the present Report is to be regretted, namely the citation of a census, of dubious authenticity, contributed by some person, not named, from "near Gilroy, Cal." The area treated is comprised in a single farm of 38 acres, and this area is reported as having supported, in 1915, 176 breeding pairs of birds, of 34 species. The species are named, with the result that the reader is invited to believe that the "Western Winter Wren" and "Western Blue Grosbeak" were there breeding side by side, as also the "Allen Hummingbird" and "Pacific Night-hawk"!

These and several other obvious blunders in determination cannot help but bring suspicion upon the whole list; if such carelessness be displayed in reporting *species*, how can reliance be placed upon the *enumeration*?

It is this thing that we would call attention to, as a danger incurred in the Biological Survey method of gathering data:

¹Bulletin No. 396, United States Department of Agriculture (Contribution from the Bureau of Biological Survey). By Wells W. Cooke. October 23, 1916. Pages 20.