

# THE CONDOR

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Western Ornithology

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## EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

At the regular meeting of the Northern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club held April 20, 1916, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

With the death of Professor Wells W. Cooke at Washington on March 30th, America has lost a working ornithologist of foremost rank. His career has been notable for consistent adherence to one line of investigation—the distribution and migration of North American birds. His achievements in this field comprised the diligent collection and classification of vast numbers of facts, and the deliberate and cautious deduction of generalizations from these. The wide recognition of the results of Professor Cooke's work as thoroughly sound, attests to his faithfulness to detail. We can only deplore with sadness the premature termination of a career of further great promise as well as creditable accomplishment.

In view of the above considerations let it be resolved that we, the members of the Cooper Ornithological Club, hereby extend

to the family and intimate friends of the late Professor Cooke our sincerest sympathies.

Mr. Harry S. Swarth, who for the past three years has served as Assistant Director and Zoologist at the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art, has rejoined the staff of the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, with which institution he had previously been affiliated from 1908 to 1913. Mr. Swarth resumes the duties of Curator of Birds, which duties involve not only the care of the extensive collections of birds in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, but also enquiry into the systematic status of the lesser worked western bird groups.

We have frequent occasion to recommend titles of ornithological books or papers such as can be considered representative of the highest types of ornithology for the use of serious beginning students. It may be of interest to call attention here to some of these examples—not that we believe our judgment final but that the attention of others may thus be called to the matter, and possibly further or different decisions elicited.

Among books which may be properly classed as literature we can think of none pertaining to western North America that has appealed to us more strongly than the late Bradford Torrey's "Field Days in California" (1913). As we know through personal contact, Mr. Torrey was an especially accurate observer, and, gifted as he was with a ready pen and a large knowledge of literature, he was able to make record of his findings in a most attractive and at the same time authoritative way.

As a high type of ornithological research based on field exploration we would hark back a good many years to Stejneger's "Results of Ornithological Explorations in the Commander Islands and Kamtschatka" (1885). In this report we find set forth, not only lists of specimens secured with critical notes on species characters and local distribution, but also a considerable proportion of sound philosophical comment. Particularly noteworthy, and acceptable today in practically every detail, are Stejneger's generalizations in regard to migration in northwestern North America and in Asia. A careful re-examination of this paper has rewarded us with a number of new ideas, or clarified notions we already held.

In the increasingly important field of geographical distribution nothing has yet appeared to supplant in point of interest and thoroughness C. Hart Merriam's "Results of a Biological Survey of Mount Shasta" (1899). There are here marshalled in convincing array data supporting the life-zone concept together with various dependent considerations having to do with distribution in

mountainous portions of the West. Such topics as the effect of slope exposure and deforestation are here for the first time clearly discussed.

Of course, among the multitude of contributions now appearing annually there are very many highly meritorious papers. But the above three would seem to have first set a high standard each of its kind.

The sympathies of the Cooper Club will go out to our fellow member, Mr. W. F. Dean, of Three Rivers, who recently suffered severe losses through a fire at his home. Mr. Dean's extensive egg collection was destroyed, as well as some mounted mammal heads and birds, a large collection of photographs, and many other objects acquired in his years of natural history collecting. In spite of the discouragements of this disaster, however, he expresses the firm intention of once more beginning the building up of another collection along similar lines.

The Club is indebted to Mr. L. E. Wyman for the compiling of the annual membership roster appearing in this issue, an arduous task as those who have labored at it can testify. This list shows a present membership of 7 honorary, 11 life, and 560 active members. It is requested that any mistakes or omissions be promptly reported to the secretary of either division of the Club.

#### THE CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATED SOCIETIES FOR THE CONSERVATION OF WILD LIFE

Most readers of THE CONDOR are familiar with the story of the organization of the California Associated Societies for the Conservation of Wild Life, and with its activities since its formation. It has taken honorable and active part in two strenuous campaigns for the protection of wild life within California, and has aided and abetted in certain other movements for conservation within the state and elsewhere. Nowhere else, as far as known to the writer, is there another organization like it. Although it has not been in the heat of the battle during the past year, it nevertheless stands as a ready instrumentality, not only to put the quietus on any reactionary legislation which might be proposed, but to assist in any measure, public or private, state or national, which may be deemed desirable. It is fair to say that the organization stands as a large and potentially important item in California's program of preparedness in caring for those natural

resources with which she has been so bountifully endowed.

It should be a matter of interest and pride to members of the Cooper Ornithological Club that the initiative in the original organization and launching of the Associated Societies was taken by this organization. At the present time the following members of the Club are members of the Executive Committee of the conservation organization, of which committee they constitute a majority: William Frederic Badé, President, representing the Sierra Club; Barton Warren Evermann, Vice-president, and Joseph Grinnell, representing the California Academy of Sciences; Charles A. Kofoid, representing the Biological Society of the Pacific; and Tracy I. Storer, Secretary-Treasurer, officially representing the Cooper Club.

According to the letterhead of the Associated Societies the organization exists "To promote an intelligent appreciation of nature, and to establish a wise policy of conservation through education and legislation." Legitimate fields of activity are numerous, and comprise not alone the promotion of desirable legislation affecting wild life in California, but the support of national measures, such as those for the protection of migratory birds, the establishment of additional federal game preserves, the creation of new national parks and the more efficient administration of those now existing, the coördination of the work of the scientific expert and of those responsible for the actual administration of wild life.

I feel sure that the present policy of the organization contemplates the conservation of the scientific collector, though formal expression of this has never been put on record. The obstacles and difficulties which hedge about the activities of the collector are already sufficiently numerous to insure against any appreciable abuse of such privileges as may be accorded him. On the other hand, the first hand acquaintance which he forms with nature is of great value, and often suffices to transform him into a fighting conservationist.

The present writer desires to express his sincere appreciation of the interest and assistance of Cooper Club members so cordially extended during the period of his incumbency as representative of the Cooper Club on the Executive Committee of the Associated Societies. If he might make a suggestion, it would be that Cooper Club members take occasion to mention their interest in the organization and that for