

NOTES AND NEWS

In view of restricted facilities for transportation, the Cooper Ornithological Club will not hold an annual meeting this year. Continuance of local meetings of divisions and chapters is, however, urged as vital in maintaining scientific interest and activity through the war period.—A. H. M.

The Board of Governors of the Cooper Ornithological Club has approved the addition of two assistant editors to the staff of the Condor. Harvey I. Fisher and Frank A. Pitelka have been chosen to serve in this capacity, beginning with the present issue of the magazine.

Word concerning recent activity in bird study in the Kansas City area has come from Mr. Russell Spotswood, of the Department of Ornithology, Kansas City Museum. Although the museum is about forty years old it has been housed at its present location, the old R. A. Long Mansion, for only a year and a half and ornithology was established as a department only a year ago. Materials include mounted specimens and study skins, and there is a laboratory and workshop. Mr. Spotswood reports that the local Audubon group now numbers about 130 members with much enthusiasm for bird study and conservation.—J. M. L.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

The appearance of William J. Beecher's extensive ecological study of breeding birds (Nesting birds and the vegetation substrate (Chicago Ornith. Soc.), 1942, viii + 69 pp., front. + 10 figs. and 2 tables) marks a definite step forward in this field of avian biology. Ornithologists and ecologists will generally agree with the Council of the Chicago Ornithological Society, the publisher, that this paper is important and that it should stimulate similar research elsewhere.

A study area of 483 acres, situated in the marshy parts of the morainic lake region of northeastern Illinois, was surveyed by the author during the years 1935 to 1939. Most intensive work was done in 1936 and 1937, when over 1000 hours were spent in the field. In 1937, over 1000 nests were found within the study area. With the aid of a photographic mosaic map and simple mapping techniques, the author plotted nest locations species by species, noting habitat relationships and stages of breeding in each instance. A vegetation map was used to relate locations and numbers of nests to plant communities. Total areas of each community were calculated together with total length of boundary or edge for each community. Some communities

were massive, some were scattered in small blocks or islands; and the ratio of total edge of each community to its total acreage is presented as a correction factor which must be applied to all figures of nesting densities before the true relationship of numbers of breeding birds to a plant community can be apparent.

Each plant community is taken up individually, its plant species are listed, and its features are discussed in relation to problems of nesting of several characteristic avian species. A relatively wide variety of habitats, modified as well as unmodified, is represented and includes lake and pond marshes, border thickets, high prairie, woodland, cultivated fields, and fence rows. Complete data on nesting populations are presented in tabular form for each community and for each species. An annotated list of species then summarizes the statistical data to include total nests, subtotals of nests within different communities, and calculated number of nests per 1000 acres of each community. There is a final figure of acres per nest (total acres of one or several communities occupied by a species ÷ total nests of that species), which is supposed to yield "a measure of the suitability of any community complex to its individual nesting species." This list includes subspecific designations of birds which appear to stem only from gratuitous assumption; in a paper of this type, it is questionable whether the names of subspecies serve any purpose.

The relation of habitat edge to population densities, or the so-called "edge effect," is considered in detail. An attempt is made to apply Raunkaier's law of frequency to nest distribution. There follow interesting discussions of nest distribution in time and space, factors in nesting distribution, and tolerance of bird species to biotic changes. A summary and bibliography of 70 titles close the paper.

There are a few typographic errors, and a need for further editing is apparent in several places. Bibliographic slips are relatively numerous: at least four different authorities, cited in the body of the paper, do not appear in the bibliography; three listed under "Literature Cited" are never cited. I found over a dozen additional inaccuracies without any attempt to check to original sources.

In view of the size of the study area, the author's investigation was designed to establish only the broader biotic relationships between nesting birds and their plant environment (page 11). Some readers may question whether this paper brings together "in a more thorough manner than has before been done the studies of