

Genera and Subgenera of the A. O. U. Check-List.—In the case of such purely conventional groups as genera and subgenera, utility is clearly their chief *raison d'être*, and this may be judged largely by the consensus of usage. In 1884, when the A. O. U. Committee prepared its Check-List of North American Birds, the feeling was more or less general among American ornithologists that there were too many genera current, and that the proper relationships of certain groups treated as genera were better expressed by reducing such groups to subgenera. This was evidently the feeling of the Committee, and on the conclusion of its work this feature of it was doubtless viewed with considerable satisfaction by all its members. As time passed on, however, the increasing tendency to differentiate subspecies on slight provocation naturally increased the relative value of the subgeneric groups. At the same time it became evident that the opinion of the Committee on genera and subgenera did not meet with the approval of ornithologists at large, and certain members of the Committee began to feel that the reduction of many 'genera' to the rank of 'subgenera' was illadvised. In 1892, this feeling was strong enough to lead to action, when all of the subgenera of *Trochilus* were given full generic rank, as was also *Ardetta* among the Herons. In 1896, a few other subgenera were similarly treated, while in 1898, no less than twelve subgenera were raised to the rank of full genera! Probably others would have received similar treatment had their status been formally challenged in such a way as to bring them up for action.

The matter has been recently considered by Dr. Coues, in 'The Osprey' for May, 1899,¹ where he claims that, in his judgment, "a large number of the subgenera now standing in the Check-List, require to be restored or advanced to full generic rank, and some additional subgenera need to be recognized." He gives a list of some 21 subgenera he believes should stand as genera, and some dozen subgenera are suggested as additions to the Check-List. Two new subgenera are proposed, namely *Pallasicarbo*, for *Phalacrocorax perspicillatus*, and *Psiloscoops*, type *Scops flammeola* Kaup. Doubtless Dr. Coues's opinion on the subject of genera and subgenera, as here set forth, is shared by other members of the Committee.—J. A. A.

Publications Received.—Bangs, Outram. (1) A New Rail from southern California. (Proc. New Engl. Zoöl. Club, 1899, pp. 45, 46). (2) The Labrador Spruce Grouse. (*Ibid.*, pp. 47, 48.)

Beal, F. E. L. Economic Relations of Birds and their Food. (Proc. 24th Ann. Meet. New Jersey State Hort. Soc., 1899.)

Brewster, William. An Undescribed Clapper Rail from Georgia and East Florida. (Proc. New Engl. Zoöl. Club, I, 1899, pp. 39-51.)

¹On Certain Generic and Subgeneric Names in the A. O. U. Check-List. The Osprey, III, May, 1899, p. 144.