

Hampshire. We found several pairs on the east slope of Stone Hill, and quite a colony on the western slope of Northwest Hill on both the Massachusetts and Vermont (Pownal) side of the State line.

*Ammodramus savannarum passerinus*. One pair found on the east slope of Northwest Hill in Williamstown.

*Vireo flavifrons*. This species and *V. gilvus* were heard in the village of Williamstown, and the former also at South Williamstown.

*Dendroica æstiva*. A single bird was heard singing on Mt. Greylock at 2500 feet elevation.

*Cistothorus palustris*. A pair were found inhabiting a small flag-grown meadow brook in Hoosac Swamp in Williamstown (600 ft.). Pontoosuc Lake is the only other locality in the county from which they have been recorded.

*Hylocichla aliciaë bicknelli*. One heard calling on the summit of Mt. Greylock on the 18th.

*Hylocichla guttata pallasii*. One heard singing on the Greylock range.

*Hylocichla mustelina*. One pair found about the meadow in the Hoosac Swamp in Williamstown among some alders, and others were heard singing on the side of Mt. Greylock at 2800 feet elevation.

*Sialia sialis*. Exceedingly abundant in the low country.—REGINALD HEBER HOWE, JR., *Longwood, Mass.*

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## RECENT LITERATURE.

Grinnell's 'Check-List of California Birds.'<sup>1</sup>—Mr. Grinnell's 'Check-List of California Birds' has evidently been prepared with care and gives a large amount of information in a condensed form about the manner of occurrence of California birds within the State of California. The list numbers 491 species and subspecies, with an additional 'Hypothetical List' of 33 species "ascribed to California, but concerning which there is doubt either as to the evidence of their occurrence or as to their validity as species." Doubtless many of these will be later added to the fauna of the State through positive records of occurrence. An 'accidental,' "to be worthy of a place on the State List," according to the author's excel-

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<sup>1</sup> Check-List of California Birds. By Joseph Grinnell. Pacific Coast Avifauna, No. 3. Cooper Ornithological Club of California. Large 8vo, pp. 92, 2 col. maps.

lent standard, "must have been as a rule secured and preserved so that it can be re-identified whenever desirable." A glance through the Check-List shows that the list of duly authenticated accidentals is already quite large, not less than 25 species resting on a single record, and about as many more on only two or three records. It would have added greatly to the usefulness of this list if, in such exceptional cases, a reference to the place of record had been added.

While, "for the sake of convenience," the sequence of the A. O. U. Check-List has been followed, "the nomenclature has in several cases been remodeled to the best of the author's own knowledge." Thus, quite contrary to present tendencies, it is held by Mr. Grinnell "that actual geographical continuity in range accompanying corresponding intergradation is the criterion for the application of trinomials," etc. As this is the chief basis of his reformations in nomenclature, they appear to rest on the author's opinions and preferences rather more than upon his "own knowledge." There are thus, with perhaps two or three exceptions, no Old World birds which have subspecific representatives in North America. Also, quite a number of forms, as among the water birds, are given full specific rank in cases where the doubt, in the minds of many ornithologists of much longer experience, is whether the forms in question are entitled to any recognition in nomenclature. In other cases, where Mr. Grinnell's material and experience can hardly have supplied exceptional equipment for decisions, forms rejected by the A. O. U. Committee—which, while not infallible, contains some fairly good ornithologists—and sometimes by their proposers, are given recognition in the California Check-List. In some other cases, as some of the local forms of the State, Mr. Grinnell has doubtless abundant resources and ample experience, and his opinion is in such instances entitled to the highest respect.

The List consists (1) of the scientific and popular name of each form; (2) a list of the technical names by which the bird has been mentioned in the literature of California ornithology; and (3) its "status," or a statement of its "range, comparative abundance and season of occurrence," usually condensed into a sentence of one to three lines. "The range is usually expressed by Zones and Faunal Areas which are outlined in the accompanying maps." These maps are two in number, the first indicating by colored areas the 'Life Zones of California,' or the 'Isothermic Areas'; the second in a similar manner shows the 'Faunal Areas of California,' or the 'Isohumic Areas,' ten in number. "The areas differently colored on the maps have been outlined as accurately as the information at hand permitted; still the boundary lines must be considered provisional until the state is carefully surveyed zoögeographically." The maps are certainly a great convenience and help one to understand at a glance the complicated nature of climatic conditions in California. Respecting the names of his faunal areas (map 2) the author says, "Nomenclatural uniformity cannot be here attempted." These 'faunal areas' are in reality arbitrarily climatic rather than faunal, being based, as the subtitle of the

map indicates, on degree of humidity rather than on true faunal conditions — humidity and temperature combined. They thus do not correspond to areas commonly designated as 'faunal,' based on the peculiar association of species as determined primarily by temperature and secondarily, in most cases, by humidity. California offers an almost unique field for this sort of research, and it is gratifying to see that the subject is receiving so much attention.

A very full and satisfactory index, including all the names mentioned in the 'synonymy,' completes this very important and exceedingly useful contribution to California ornithology.—J. A. A.

**Berlepsch and Hartert on the Birds of the Orinoco Region.**<sup>1</sup>—This excellent memoir is based on collections made by Mr. and Mrs. George K. Cherrie in 1897, 1898 and 1899, on the Orinoco River, with much additional material collected by Mr. Samuel M. Klages, partly on the Caura River, and by Mr. E. André on the Nicare, a tributary of the Caura. The number of specimens thus available for study is not stated, but must be several thousand. The number of species and subspecies represented is 468, of which 8 species and 44 subspecies are described as new, as well as one genus. Localities and dates of collection are given, with notes on the color of bill, feet, iris, and 'soft parts,' as furnished by the collectors. There is also, *passim*, important comment on nomenclatural questions, the relationship of forms, etc. The memoir closes with some 'General Conclusions' (signed E. H.) on the faunal relations of the different parts of the region under treatment. Owing to the many difficulties presented, none of the collectors was able to reach "the unexplored tableland and mountain ranges forming the watershed between the basins of the Amazon and Orinoco Rivers, marked as the 'Sierra Parima' on the maps," which region hence still offers a tempting field for ornithological exploration.

In this connection the authors have done good service in attempting to fix type regions for the species described by previous authors from unknown, erroneous, or vaguely given localities. They have "in every case quoted the original description, which is the basis of our knowledge of each particular form," to which their citations are mainly limited, instead of including well known works, such as the British Museum 'Catalogue of Birds,' "where everybody knows that the bird is described or mentioned." "Where no locality is stated in the first description, or where the given locality is vague or erroneous, *we have added or substituted a sufficiently exact 'habitat'* as a starting-point. These additions and substitutes are not arbitrarily chosen, but always those that are the actual or the most likely ones whence the types have come, as apparent from the

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<sup>1</sup> On the Birds of the Orinoco Region. By Count Hans von Berlepsch and Ernest Hartert. *Novitates Zoologicae*, Vol. IX, 1902, pp. 1-134, pl. xii.