

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### Cooke's 'Distribution and Migration of North American Shorebirds.'

EDITORS OF 'THE AUK':—

*Dear Sirs:—*

I feel it my duty to call attention to some rather important omissions in the list of sources for Prof. W. W. Cooke's valuable and for the most part admirable report on the 'Distribution and Migration of North American Shorebirds,' issued as Bulletin No. 35 of the Biological Survey (1910). This report contains the statement by the Chief of the Survey that "a knowledge of the summer and winter abodes of the several species and of the routes they take in migration is essential to intelligent legislation in their behalf, and, accordingly, *all the known facts in regard to this part of their life history are here brought together*" (the italics are mine); and the author, Prof. Wells W. Cooke, states that "the data on the breeding and wintering of the shorebirds has been collected from all available printed sources," as well as from other sources named. The author's statement as to the dates of migration is that they "have been obtained principally from the migration schedules sent in by the several hundred observers in the United States and Canada, who for a quarter of a century have contributed to the Biological Survey spring and fall reports of their observations." It seems natural to infer that in the case of the migration data, as with the breeding and wintering, the printed sources would be consulted.

Now, without attempting a thorough investigation of the field, I find that three publications of some importance seem to have entirely escaped the attention of the compiler. These are 'The Birds of Essex County, Massachusetts,' by Charles W. Townsend, Nuttall Ornithological Club, 1905; 'The Birds of the Cambridge Region,' by William Brewster, Nuttall Ornithological Club, 1906; and 'Birds of Labrador,' by C. W. Townsend and Glover M. Allen, Boston Society of Natural History, 1907. It may seem almost incredible that these three publications, which must be recognized as absolutely authoritative in their respective fields, could have been overlooked, but an examination of the report proves conclusively that such is the case. A consultation of Townsend and Allen's 'Birds of Labrador,' for instance, would have informed Professor Cooke that the Northern Phalarope is a common summer resident in Labrador and breeds along the entire coast and that Turner's Ungava Bay record is by no means the only one for the peninsula, Audubon, Low, Bigelow, and Spreadborough having found the bird there, as well as Townsend and Allen. Mr. Brewster's 'Birds of the Cambridge Region,' too, would have furnished in its record of Feb. 13, 1890, an earlier date for the Woodcock's arrival

than Professor Cooke's earliest for eastern Massachusetts, Feb. 22, 1902. Moreover Cooke gives no fall dates for the Woodcock in Massachusetts, while Brewster gives November 10 as the average date of departure and December 13 as the latest. So in the case of Wilson's Snipe, Cooke gives no dates for spring departures in Massachusetts and no fall dates for that State, all of which he might have obtained from 'Birds of the Cambridge Region,' besides getting an earlier date for the spring arrival. The Pectoral Sandpiper is known to Massachusetts ornithologists and sportsmen as an abundant fall but rare spring migrant, and is so characterized in 'The Birds of Essex County.' Cooke, however, says nothing of its rarity in the East in spring, simply stating that it "has a very pronounced southeastward migration in the fall," and that "it is a common migrant throughout the whole of North America east of the Rocky Mountains." For the Spotted Sandpiper Cooke's latest date for eastern Massachusetts is October 14, while Brewster has November 1 and Townsend November 14. The Cartwright records of the Eskimo Curlew given in 'Birds of Labrador' are very full and interesting, covering the dates from July 28 to October 24. These, of course, are omitted from Mr. Cooke's report, which gives only two records of the bird for Labrador, the regular point of departure of the species on its southern migration! Of the Golden Plover, Cooke says that it appears not infrequently at Cape Cod and Long Island. As a matter of fact the species is not extremely rare on other parts of the Massachusetts coast. Townsend's dates for Essex County are Aug. 23-Nov. 2. Cooke misses the second record of Wilson's Plover for Massachusetts, — that of one found by Dr. Townsend in a gunner's bag at Ipswich, May 8, 1904, — and says that it "has wandered once to Massachusetts."

These notes are only fragmentary, but they are sufficient, I think, to show that Professor Cooke's paper on the distribution and migration of the Shorebirds must be regarded simply as an analysis of the official data of the Biological Survey supplemented by the records of the National Museum and by *some* reference to the literature, and not, as we are led to expect, a full statement of "all the known facts in regard to this part of their life history." Valuable as they are, it is much to be regretted that these studies were not made complete within their limits; and while we must be grateful to Professor Cooke for bringing these data together and publishing them for the benefit of ornithologists, legislators, and the public in general, it is well to know just what they are and what they are not.

Yours very truly,

West Roxbury, Mass.

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