

NOTES AND NEWS.

ONLY those who have had occasion to pursue their studies in the Ornithological rooms of the United States National Museum have realized what an enormous work Dr. Charles W. Richmond has accomplished in his spare moments during the past fifteen years, in preparing a card catalogue of the described species of birds. The student of North American birds with numerous comprehensive works and the A. O. U. Check-List at his elbow, has no conception of the difficulties that confront one who is studying the birds of South America, the East Indies, or Africa. Even with the literature accessible,— and there are few libraries in America that approach completeness, there are numerous questions of date of publication, first place of publication etc., which require much expenditure of valuable time for their solution and which are being worked out over and over again by different individuals, not always, unfortunately, with uniform results. Dr. Richmond's cards contain the actual date of publication, the original reference and spelling, type locality and location of the type specimen when indicated, all verified by his personal investigations. The periodicals and single volumes have been studied page by page and many new names proposed years ago and hitherto overlooked have been brought to light.

Some 30,000 cards have been completed, together with about 10,000 additional cards containing fragmentary data supplementing earlier cards or referring to those not yet prepared. Dr. Richmond estimates that the catalogue is at least three-fifths completed.

From what has already been said the value of such a list, prepared as it is by a skilled ornithologist, and the amount of time that the student saves who has access to it, can perhaps be appreciated. The labor involved in its preparation probably no one but its author will ever appreciate!

With the completion of his task practically assured Dr. Richmond has in mind the possibility of having all the future cards printed in duplicate or rather in a limited number of sets according to the demand that there might be for them and at the same time to reprint those already completed, beginning with the rarer and less accessible publications, so that such institutions as cared to coöperate with him would in a few years possess a complete card catalogue of the described species of birds of the world.

The benefit that such an unselfish undertaking would prove to the ornithology of the future can hardly be estimated, and should Dr. Richmond seriously consider the project he should receive every assistance and support.

AS TO BIRD BANDING.

Berlin, Md.,
January 20th, 1912.

"The Auk,
New York City.

Gentlemen:—

One of my men has just come in from a country mill and tells me that he has killed a bird, the species of which he did not know or else would not tell me, with a leg band on it, which he brought to me. Same bears the number 6302.

Would you mind letting me know the species and particulars of this matter, using the enclosed stamped envelope?

Thanking you in advance for the courtesy of your reply, I beg to remain,

Yours very truly,

(Signed) CHAS. W. TINGLE."

The above communication established an exceedingly interesting bird banding record. On consulting card No. 6302 the following memoranda were found: "Species—*Sialia sialis*; Locality—Meriden, N. H.; Date—June 3, 1911; Banded by—Ernest Harold Baynes; Approximate age of bird—About two weeks. Remarks—Band placed on left leg. The bird was one of a family in an unpainted wooden box on the corner of an old shed. Five young in nest."

This, to be sure, is only an isolated record, but from it we learn that a young bluebird reared at Meriden, N. H., in June, 1911, was wintering at Berlin, Md., or at any rate was there on Jan. 20, 1912, and it has since been ascertained that the bird shot was one of a flock of several. In addition to getting a banding record, therefore, we obtain a sidelight on the manner in which bird life is being destroyed in certain sections of the country.

When the Linnæan Society of New York first undertook some months ago to push the work of the American Bird Banding Association, and the members of the Bird Banding Committee inaugurated a campaign to raise funds for that purpose, unexpected obstacles were met with. Letters of protest were received from some, setting forth the cruelties involved in such a practice as bird banding; while many refused to contribute because the Association had not yet shown sufficient results—forgetting that any project in its infancy must be nursed for a time on faith until a start can be made. Let it be understood that those striving to carry on the bird banding work are not desirous of opposing or antagonizing anyone. On the other hand they invite suggestions and sane criticisms from everyone. If the banding of any particular species, for instance, is discovered for any reason whatsoever to be detrimental, members of the association will be instructed to pass birds of that species by. One gentleman has even been so far-sighted as to suggest that the bands on birds' legs might attract the

attention of gunners, who would shoot the creatures to satisfy curiosity. But most birds carry their tarsi well buried in the body feathers while flying and it is gratifying to know that of all the return records thus far received none have resulted from the band being seen while the bird was still at large. The discovery of the band has in each case been purely accidental and has taken place after the bird was collected and in the hand.

It may be of interest to some to learn that during the summer of 1910 Mr. H. F. Witherby of London, England, issued to his staff of bird banders over 12,000 bands, and of these over 7900 were actually placed on birds. Two of his workers banded over 2300 birds (representing 16 species) and including 1200 Black-headed gulls, 600 Common terns, 157 Swallows and 105 Lesser Black-backed gulls. Europeans, in fact, are, at present, far ahead of us in this matter of investigating the movements of birds by the aid of metal rings. Bird banding activities are being carried on not alone by Witherby & Co. of London, but by "Country Life" of the same place, the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, and at the following places on the Continent — Rossiten, Denmark; Leyden, Holland; Budapest, Hungary; and possibly elsewhere. If the thousands of bands used by these investigators each year impeded or inconvenienced the birds to any extent or caused many to die it would seem that some evidence in support of this fact would long ago have come to light. Nor must it be thought that only the larger birds in Europe have been banded, for during a single season in England alone over 3000 tits and other birds no larger than some of our warblers were tagged. It might not be untimely, therefore, if Americans were to divest themselves of the delusion that bird banding is fanciful and unpractical if not cruel and barbaric.

The American Bird Banding Association has succeeded in gathering enough funds to push ahead with the manufacturing for use during the coming season of a fair number of bands which are now being made. These bands may not come from the factory for several weeks, but should be ready for distribution well before the nestlings of everything but great horned owls are old enough to receive them. Members of the Association will receive notice when bands are available and then it will remain to be seen what the season of 1912 will bring forth.

HOWARD H. CLEAVES, *Secy.-Treas.*,
Public Museum,
New Brighton, N. Y.

ON February 27, 1912, the American Museum of Natural History opened for public view another of the notable habitat groups for which its ornithological gallery is famous. This represents the birds of tropical eastern Mexico, and illustrates the influence of altitude on the distribution of life. The group includes such birds as the Amazon Parrot, Parakeet, Toucan, Motmot, Trogon, tropical Tanagers, Cuckoos, Orioles, etc., which are found in the dense tropical forest about the base of Mt. Orizaba while

the snow capped mountain itself represented in the background shows the temperate and boreal zones that one traverses in ascending to its peak (18,225 feet); the same transition that would be experienced in a journey of 3000 miles northward at sea level.

The group was prepared under the direction of Mr. Frank M. Chapman, Curator of Birds, from field studies made by him on the American Museum expedition of March and April, 1910. The background is by Robert Bruce Horsfall from studies by Henry A. Ferguson and Louis Agassiz Fuertes, the accessories were prepared by William Peters and the birds by Henry C. Raven.

THE Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of its founding on March 21, 1912. The Academy has always held a foremost place in the development of ornithology in America. Among the men who in 1812 conceived the idea of organizing the society there was one, Thomas Say, who figured as an ornithologist, although more prominent in other branches of science; while among the first members elected was Alexander Wilson whose untimely death occurred before he had qualified for membership.

In the years that followed the Academy numbered among its active members Charles Lucien Bonaparte, George Ord, Thomas Nuttall, Thomas B. Wilson, John Cassin, Edward Harris, William Gambel, Adolphus L. Heerman, John K. Townsend, Samuel W. Woodhouse, while among its correspondents were Audubon, Baird, Lawrence, Coues, Xantus, etc.

For many years the Journal and Proceedings which now comprise eighty-four volumes formed the principal vehicle for ornithological publication in America and especially during the active period of Cassin's career became famous among ornithologists the world over.

The great ornithological collection of the Academy which now comprises some 60,000 specimens first gained prominence through the munificence of Dr. Thomas B. Wilson at one time president of the society who purchased the Rivoli, Gould, Boucier and other foreign collections as well as all the North American material that could be secured and by 1857 had established the Academy's collection as the greatest in the world, in the opinion of no less an authority than Dr. P. L. Sclater.

With the exception of the American Philosophical Society which celebrated its centenary a few years ago, and perhaps a few others, the Philadelphia Academy is the oldest scientific society in America and probably the oldest of those devoted purely to the natural sciences. Its completion of one hundred years of activity really marks the completion of the first century of serious investigations in natural history in this country. The record as we review it is one of which we can well be proud and in the development of science in America to the high standard that it has now attained, the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia has contributed not a little.

THE Cooper Ornithological Club has recently established two permanent committees for the conservation of wild life. The chief objects of the Club in doing this may be stated as follows. (1) To co-operate with other organizations, including the State Fish and Game Commissions and the Federal Bureau of Biological Survey, to the end that the wild life yet remaining in state and nation may be more effectively protected. (2) To work at all times for an enlightened public sentiment along lines of the conservation of wild animals.

Following is the personnel of the committees. For the Northern Division of the Club, W. P. Taylor, Museum Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, Chairman; H. C. Bryant, University of California; J. S. Hunter, State Fish and Game Commission, San Francisco; H. W. Carriger, San Francisco; and John W. Mailliard, San Francisco. For the Southern Division, Frank S. Daggett, Director Museum of Science, Arts and History, Los Angeles, Chairman; J. Eugene Law, Hollywood; H. J. Lelande, Los Angeles; Howard Robertson, Los Angeles; and G. Willett, Los Angeles.

MESSRS. W. H. Osgood and Malcolm P. Anderson sailed from New Orleans January 27, 1912, for Colon *en route* for northern Peru where they will cross the Andes into extreme western Brazil. Their object is to collect birds and mammals for the Field Museum of Natural History, but their exact itinerary and time of return will depend upon the conditions that they encounter.

THE Delaware Valley Ornithological Club held its regular annual meeting at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia on January 4, 1912.

The officers elected for the current year are President, Samuel N. Rhoads; Vice-President, Stewardson Brown; Secretary, J. Fletcher Street; Treasurer, Samuel C. Palmer, Editor of *Cassinia*, Robert Thomas Moore.

The Club held fifteen meetings during the year, some of the more important communications being A Trip across Canada, by Wm. E. Roberts; Some Western Birds and their Home Lands, by J. A. G. Rehn; Bird-life about Tampa, Florida, by Robert T. Moore; Birds of Northern Venezuela, by Stewardson Brown; Life in the Heron Rookeries of Central Florida, by O. E. Baynard; Birds of the Tierra Caliente of Ecuador, by S. N. Rhoads; Some Birds of St. Margaret's Bay, N. S., by Dr. Spencer Trotter.

THE Journal of the Maine Ornithological Society announces its discontinuance with the December 1911 number, completing its thirteenth volume. We are glad to learn however that this action does not involve the dissolution of the society. It has done excellent work in the interest of bird study and bird protection and we trust that its activities may continue.

"THE GAME-BIRDS OF SOUTH AFRICA" is the title of an important work which Messrs. Witherby & Co. are about to publish. The book is by

Major Boyd Horsbrugh, and will be illustrated by nearly seventy colored plates reproduced in facsimile from the very remarkable drawings of Sergeant C. G. Davies. The work will be in small quarto, and will be issued in four quarterly parts.

The same firm have in preparation and are shortly publishing for Mr. F. W. Headley an illustrated book on the FLIGHT OF BIRDS, a subject which the author has long studied. The book is designed to interest the aviator as well as the ornithologist.

AN Ornithology of Porto Rico is announced by José J. Monclova y Cagigal, to be written in Spanish, French and English.