

Maine and on page 45 for one which relates to the Atlantic Ocean. Corrections as to authorship should therefore be made in the case of the following titles appearing on page 72 of the Index:

Carpodacus purpureus at Portland, Maine, in winter.

Early appearance of *Empidonax minimus* at Portland, Maine.

Unusual nesting site of *Dendroica virens*.

Winter notes from Portland, Maine.

American Crossbill at sea.

These were published by Captain Brown.

Yours very truly,

N. C. B.

Concealing Coloration.

EDITOR OF 'THE AUK':—

Dear Sir:—The naturalists answer about this or that creature, whose wonderful background matching I show, that he has no use for concealment. Here they are in their own field though venturing far beyond scientific knowledge; but this does not in the slightest degree affect the all the more interesting fact of his astoundingly perfect background painting. And because *in all these cases*, these creatures (supposed to need no concealment) nevertheless have it *from the very situation from which some animals see them*. I do not believe that so wonderful an equipment is for nothing, and I doubt the naturalists' assertion that it does not help the wearer.

Most naturalists also deride the idea that so vast a variety of costume as that of the forest fauna could all be subject to one law of concealing coloration.

Concealing coloration is simply that which passes the wearer off for *any details* of the scene, and of these the forest contains of course a boundless variety. To test at the start the probability of such a general law, turn from the complexities of the forest to the simplicity of other realms, the sea, the sands, the snow—look at the inhabitants of all these more or less monochrome parts of the world, and you will find that everywhere the nearer to one single color note is the scene the nearer to a corresponding single color note is the animal's costume.

Let them tell me why this so widespread resemblance of inhabitants to background should suddenly cease when one comes to the complex scenery of the woods, which offer a *hundred* models for counterfeiting where the sea, snow or desert offers one.

Therefore, since each different forest costume is a duplicate of some part of the scene, the catchword that if in the same woods any particular costume is a concealer the others are not, boils down to the same absurdity as saying that if one of the *things* they counterfeit is real, the others aren't—in other words, if the tree trunk is real, the leaves are not.

It is incredible that a conception born of no particle of fact should be so tenacious of life.

Here is an illustration of the truth.

There are three prominent types of flycatching beak. The gigantic mouth and so to speak *no* beak of the Goatsucker, the common sized, stout beak of *Tyrannus*, and the slim, long, bent-needle beak of a Jacamar. By the common logic, each of these birds should be told that it *does not catch insects*, since it is a physical impossibility that if a beak of one particular shape does so, one of a *different* shape can also do so. The fact that different costumes represent different details of forest scenery is no more remarkable than that different species have a different anatomy.

In the animal world, each different mode of getting a living gathers into a community members of widely differing genera and forms, but, in each of these communities every differently shaped species will be found to use his body proportionately differently in attaining the same end, and for one of these to attain, in those same woods, *inconspicuousness* by *passing for a different forest detail* from that counterfeited by his neighbor, is in no way more remarkable than for him to bring to this community his different anatomy, and the main point is that all these counterfeits do succeed.

ABBOTT H. THAYER.

Monadnock, N. H., June 1, 1912.

NOTES AND NEWS.

In the present issue of 'The Auk' there is presented the sixteenth supplement to the A. O. U. Check-List of N. A. Birds, the first since the appearance of the new (third) edition of the Check-List. It is now nearly thirty years since the A. O. U. Committee on the Classification and Nomenclature of North American Birds was first appointed, and as a new generation of ornithologists has grown up in the meantime, a word as to the objects and province of this committee may not be out of place.

Everyone has an undisputed right to describe as many new species or races as he pleases and so fully has this privilege been exercised that new forms have been split off on finer and finer grades of differentiation as the years go by. Whether or not all these forms shall be included in the Check-List is one of the questions that the A. O. U. has left to its Committee. The Committee endeavors to obtain authentic material from the author of the new form and from elsewhere, and with the author's presentation of the case before it, decides by vote whether or not the alleged differences are sufficiently well marked to warrant recognition by name