

Mathews' 'The Birds of Australia.'¹ — With Volume V, Mr. Mathews begins the consideration of the hawks and eagles. These being conspicuous land birds have long engaged the attention of Australian ornithologists, and he is able to compile a much greater amount of information regarding their habits than was possible in connection with the families of water birds which have occupied the greater part of the preceding volumes. This fact however, in no way serves to curtail the very full discussion of taxonomy and nomenclature that has marked Mr. Mathews' work. He opens with an extended historical review of the classification of the Falconiformes in which, by the way, we find no reference to the publications of Robert Ridgway upon this subject, which surely deserve mention even though they did not cover the entire field. Following this is a discussion of the generic names of Lacepede's 'Tableaux' (1799). These were accompanied by diagnoses but with no species cited. The diagnoses are not full enough to enable us to determine with certainty what hawks he had in mind. Daudin however, in the Didot edition of Buffon (1802) republished Lacepede's diagnoses and cited several species after each, using his generic names. Mr. Mathews rejects Lacepede's names as *nomina nuda* and quotes the genera from Daudin "ex Lacepede." This is an easy way out of the trouble, but we do not think it is justified. Lacepede's names are not *nomina nuda* since they are accompanied by diagnoses. They are unidentifiable if we choose to so regard them, but in that case they preclude the use of the same names by any subsequent author just as do any other unidentifiable names. It seems to us that in such cases we must accept Daudin's action as a definite identification of Lacepede's names, but the names must, if used at all, date from Lacepede, 1799. The result is of course the same as that arrived at by Mr. Mathews, but does not conflict with the International Code.

Mr. Mathews treatment of subspecies in this volume is not quite clear. He puts them in the synonymy of the species and then tabulates them in the closing paragraphs without clearly distinguishing those which he regards as valid and those which are probably not.

We note the following new names proposed: subgenera; *Paraspizias* (p. 74) for *Sparvius cirrhocephalus*, and *Ictiniastur* (p. 146) for *Milvus sphenurus*; subspecies; *Circus assimilis quirindus* (p. 23) Celebes; and *Accipiter cirrhocephalus quæsitandus* (p. 81) Cape York.

We have heard a good deal about the destruction of hawks in this country but our efforts are apparently eclipsed in Australia, where bonuses were paid in 1899 for the slaughter of 7865 Wedge-tailed Eagles, while as late as 1903, 1060 of the same species were poisoned in eight months at one station. There is some justification in this slaughter as the birds are very injurious to lambs, but let us hope that this fine bird may be saved from absolute extermination! — W. S.

¹ *The Birds of Australia.* By Gregory M. Mathews, Vol. V, Part 1. Witherby & Co. London. November 5, 1915, pp. 1-152, pl. 234-244.