

know nothing of the classification of birds, however, and so the galleys went forward with the result now to be found in "The Anatomical Record" (Vol. 9, No. 10, Oct. 20, 1915, pp. 749-750).

In so far as my present views are concerned with respect to the position of the *Aramidæ* in the system, they are correctly set forth in "The Anatomical Record" of August 20, 1915 (Vol. 9, No. 8, pp. 591-606).

Faithfully yours,

R. W. SHUFELDT.

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### NOTES AND NEWS.

SYSTEMATIC zoölogy occupies a peculiar position in the field of science, in that its publications are to a certain extent privileged — *i. e.* protected by laws which do not pertain to other scientific publications. The latter are judged on their merits and an author who is guilty of slipshod careless writing, or whose publications are ambiguous or insufficient, is ignored; the merits of his work discounted, and his conclusions questioned. In other words he loses caste in the scientific world. Not so the describer of new species. No matter how bad or inadequate his diagnosis or how unnecessary the naming of the species, a name once proposed has nomenclatural status, and is a part of systematic science — for this matter is governed by the rules of nomenclature.

These rules were formulated mainly for the purpose of dealing with the earlier literature of zoölogy where names were proposed by writers who did not realize their responsibilities and did not consider the importance of making their descriptions adequate for the future. Obviously if we are to have stability of nomenclature on a basis of priority all of these earlier names must be considered and hence the rules.

It probably never occurred to the framers of any of the Codes of Nomenclature that present day systematists would take advantage of these rules to save themselves trouble, and publish new names with just enough description to save their status under the rules; and yet this is precisely the situation that we face today in ornithology — and possibly in other branches of zoölogy and botany.

Hundreds of new birds have been named in recent years with diagnoses limited to one or two lines. These birds are not described, no one could identify them from the meagre diagnoses but in each case a type specimen and a type locality are cited and in that way the law is complied with and we are prevented from rejecting the name as unidentifiable! The author has another species to his credit, he or the institution he represents has another type specimen, but other ornithologists are put to the trouble

of borrowing his type or journeying to his collection to see it, before they can tell what he is talking about and the advance of ornithological science is impeded.

Usually a very little additional labor on the part of the author is all that is necessary to avoid all this trouble. Let us take a concrete example: A new form "b" is named and described as "similar to 'a' but larger" and a type specimen and locality are added. We have a specimen from another locality which is also "similar to 'a' but larger." We cannot tell whether it is identical with "b" or not. It may really differ more in size from "b" than the latter does from "a."

Now the describer of "b" must have measured both "b" and "a." If he did not his work is so careless that he had no right to describe the new form at all. If he *did* measure them it would be very little trouble to add the measurements to his diagnosis. When an author has decided that a form is new, nine-tenths of his work is done, and it is a duty he owes to science to complete the work by presenting all the data that governed him in naming it.

Some years ago a plea was circulated among scientific journals asking them to refuse to publish new genera unless a type species was designated. It would seem that some similar radical step must soon be taken with regard to these inadequately described new species and subspecies.

It is not necessary to draw up long verbose descriptions, often a few words embodying definite measurements and definite color values are all that are necessary, combined with a comparison with nearly allied forms.

If authors would realize that the advancement of science should stand ahead of the greed for names or types we should have no more of this inexcusable, slovenly work.

Let it be hoped that in future it will be generally recognized that an author who is guilty of such work invites a reputation for carelessness and inaccuracy and that a journal which lends itself to such publication lessens its dignity. There are comparatively few ornithologists who are offenders but they set a very bad example. Let us hope that they may realize the evil of this sort of work and that all ornithologists and editors will stand together in strenuous opposition to its continuance.

THE Congo Expedition of the American Museum of Natural History has reached a most successful conclusion; and Mr. Herbert Lang, its leader, returned to New York on Nov. 12 last, after more than six years of uninterrupted work in the Congo Basin. His assistant, Mr. James P. Chapin, had preceded him by some 7 months. All their collections, in spite of the dangers and difficulties caused by the struggle in Europe, have arrived safely at the Museum; and it speaks well for conditions in the Belgian Congo that the party can boast of not having lost a single box of collections, even during the very long overland stages in the Congo, where not a few of them were carried for a distance of 50 days march.

This enterprise was carried on with the coöperation of the Belgian

Government, and a part of the zoological material is to be turned over to the Congo Museum at Tervueren.

Messrs. Lang and Chapin sailed for the Congo in May, 1909, and have collected across the entire breadth of the Belgian Congo. After ascending the river as far as Stanley Falls they continued eastward up into the great Ituri Forest, and then northward to the Upper Nile as far as the Lado Enclave and the Bahr-el-Ghazal.

Conditions of transportation necessitated returning by much the same route, and on the return journey much additional material was secured. The greater part of the time was thus spent in the northeastern part of the Congo, one of the most remote, most primitive, and most interesting portions of the continent.

The collections comprise not only magnificent representatives of the big game of the region, the Square-lipped Rhinoceros, the Okapi, the Derby Eland, the Bongo, and the Ituri Forest-Hog, but also extensive series of the mammals in general, birds, reptiles, amphibia and fishes, many thousands of invertebrates and a great deal of ethnological material, with numerous plaster-casts of faces from many different tribes, including the Pygmies. All this is supplemented by Mr. Lang's remarkable collection of photographs comprising some 7000 negatives.

The vertebrate specimens alone number some 20,000, but we shall only consider in detail the results of the work in ornithology. The specimens of birds collected number over 6200, representing — it is estimated — some 600 different species. They are accompanied by a collection of nests and eggs, and many interesting notes on food, habits, voice, and migration. These results will assuredly constitute an important addition to our knowledge of the avifauna of the Congo, and it is hoped that a general report on them will be published.

For the present, the new species discovered are being described in the 'Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History'; among them is a very distinct new genus, *Cerioleptes*, a Honey-Guide. The study of the bird collection has been entrusted to Mr. Chapin, junior member of the party, whose long field experience should prove extremely valuable.

Above all Messrs. Lang and Chapin were fortunate in maintaining themselves in good health for such a long period in a country justly famous for its disagreeable climate, insidious fevers, and sleeping sickness.

A NATURAL history survey of the Yosemite National Park is now absorbing the attention of several of the staff members of the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. In fact, during most of the past year, one or more representatives have been in the field, gathering specimens and information which will be used as basis of a scientific report and of a semi-popular account. Director Joseph Grinnell, Dr. Walter P. Taylor, Curator of Mammals, and Mr. Tracy I. Storer, Assistant Curator of Birds, are conjointly engaged in compiling the reports. They, with several student-assistants, have already been associated in the field-work.

The objects of the work have been to ascertain the nature and extent of the life-zones, and the life-history, systematic status, and inter-relationships of the constituent species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. As regards the birds, many extensions of range have been established, as also some interesting habit-relationships.

MR. GEORGE K. CHERRIE one of the American Museum's representatives on Col. Roosevelt's Brazilian trip has for the past three months been engaged at the Museum in preparing for publication a report on the important collections of birds made by him while a member of that expedition. At the completion of that work the Museum plans to send Mr. Cherrie back to Brazil to investigate more thoroughly the bird-life of certain promising sections through which the Roosevelt party passed. This expedition will be made under the joint auspices of Col. Roosevelt and the Museum.

THE ACADEMY of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia has recently obtained the extensive collection of Guatemalan birds made by Messrs. Samuel N. Rhoads and Earl L. Poole on an expedition conducted by Mr. Rhoads during the early part of 1915. Mr. Rhoads is at present engaged in preparing a report on the collection.

For some years past it has been customary to provide numbered 'identification buttons' for members attending the A. O. U. Meetings. There has, however, been a demand for a more permanent A. O. U. badge which could be used at meetings in connection with a ribbon furnished by the local committee containing the identification number, etc.; or as an ornament suitable for wear at any time.



To meet this demand a blue and gold enamel pin has been specially designed as shown in the accompanying cut, which will be mailed postpaid to any Associate, Member, or Fellow of the

A. O. U. for fifty cents (cost price).—Address DR. JONATHAN DWIGHT, 134 W. 71ST ST., NEW YORK CITY.

In an obituary notice of Graf Hans von Berlepsch in the October Auk there was an unfortunate confusion with Baron Hans von Berlepsch. The latter is still living and it is he who has done so much for bird protection not the late Graf.

JUST as we go to press, we learn with sorrow of the death, at Cannes, on November 28, of Henry E. Dresser, one of the original Honorary Fellows of the A. O. U. A notice will appear in the April 'Auk'.