

which was made in 1907, comprises fifteen species, eight of which had not been previously known from the island, and which bring the total number of its bird fauna up to 26.

Seven of the forms represented in Dr. Abbott's collection prove to belong to undescribed races which are here named and diagnosed by Mr. Oberholser as follows: *Spilornis bassus baweanus* (p. 185); *Sauropatis chloris cyanescens* (p. 189); *Strix baweana* (p. 190); *Microtarsus atriceps abbotti* (p. 193); *Malacocincla abbotti baweana* (p. 194); *Gracula javensis baweana* (195); and *Antheptes malacensis baweanus* (p. 196).

In a footnote Mr. Oberholser discusses the question of family names and argues that the name Bubonidæ should not be changed to Strigidæ simply because the name *Strix* (of earlier date than *Bubo*) is found to be applicable to the genus formerly known as *Syrnium*, and hence takes its place in the family Bubonidæ. In other words a family should take its name, not from the oldest generic name in the family but from the genus upon which the family was originally founded. It follows that the family name need only be changed when the name of the "type genus" is changed. This seems to be a sound argument and if followed will avoid some very undesirable and misleading changes.—W. S.

Wetmore on Secondary Sexual Characters in the Ruddy Duck.¹—

In dissecting some Ruddy Ducks Mr. Wetmore was able to verify the statement, first made by Macgillivray, that in this species the *bullæ ossea* usually present in the trachea of the males of river and sea ducks, was entirely absent. Carrying his investigations further he discovered a remarkable tracheal air-sac which is used when the males are displaying during the mating season. The presence of this sac is responsible for the full and loose condition of the skin of the neck in this species, which renders it possible to slip the head through it when skinning a specimen, something which is quite impossible in our other ducks. Upon examining skins of other members of the subfamily Erismaturinæ he found the same condition of the neck skin in other species of *Erismatura* as well as in *Thalassornis* and *Nomonyx*.

Mr. Wetmore's studies are particularly welcome as we are badly in need of more knowledge of the anatomy of birds in arriving at a true understanding of their systematic relationships. The field is a large one but for some reason or other has not been attractive to ornithologists. We hope that Mr. Wetmore may receive every encouragement to continue his investigations along these lines.—W. S.

Mathews' 'Birds of Australia.'²—The first part of volume six which is now before us begins the treatment of the Parrots, a group of birds

¹ On Certain Secondary Sexual Characters in the Male Ruddy Duck, *Erismatura jamaicensis* (Gmelin). By Alexander Wetmore. Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., Vol. 52, pp. 479-482. February 8, 1917.

² The Birds of Australia. By Gregory M. Mathews. Vol. VI, Part I. November 22, 1916.

abundantly represented on the Australian continent and closely associated with it in ornithological history. This number covers the Lories (*Trichoglossoidæ*), the Lorilets (*Opopsittidæ*), the Palm Cockatoos (*Proboscigeridæ*), and the Black Cockatoos (*Kakatoeidæ* — in part). The discussion of the nomenclature of both genera and species is as usual very full, and there is an historical résumé of the systematic literature of the entire group of Parrots.

Now that Mr. Mathews has reached families that are largely limited to the country of which he writes, or those in the same region, there are but few extra-limital forms discussed and fewer far-reaching changes in nomenclature. We note the following new names in this installment of the work: *Parvipsitta* subgen. nov. (p. 43), type *Psittacus pusillus* White; *Nannopsittacus* gen. nov. (p. 65), type *Cyclopsitta suavisima* Selater; *Probosciger aterrimus oorti* subsp. nov. (p. 94), type locality, Dutch New Guinea. There is an elaborate discussion of the geographic races of the great black Palm Cockatoos and their proper nomenclature, which throws much light on a vexed question.—W. S.

Origin of the Generic Name *Æthia*.¹—Dr. E. Hartert has recently called attention to the fact that the name *Æthia* adopted in the last edition of the A. O. U. Check-List in place of *Simorhynchus*, should be cited from Merrem (*Versuch eines Grundnisses zur Allgemeinen Geschichte und natürlichen Eintheilung der Vögel*, Leipzig, 1788) instead of from Dumont (*Dict. Sci. Nat.*, revised edition, I, 1816, Suppl., 71). This is a very welcome addition to our knowledge of the history of the name, but Dr. Hartert seems rather severe in his criticism of the A. O. U. Committee for not running the name back to its original source.

The writer is responsible for calling attention to the name (see *Auk*, 1907, p. 190) and so far as he is aware it had not been quoted by any ornithologist except Dumont, which would indicate that Merrem's work referred to by Dr. Hartert as "well known but somewhat scarce," is decidedly less well known than he seems to think. It is moreover not to be found in the libraries of either Philadelphia or Washington. Dr. Hartert asks: "Why was no search made for Merrem's name?" The writer would reply that a search was made. Sherborn's 'Index Animalium' was consulted and while the work cited by Dr. Hartert was found it is stated that it contains no new species and as the name *Æthia* is not listed by Sherborn, it was a natural inference that it did not occur in the work.

Curiously enough Dr. Hartert corroborates Sherborn by stating that the German work contains only vernacular names but adds that *Æthia* occurs on page 7 of a Latin edition which he quotes as 'Tentamen Naturalis Systematis Avium.' This work seems to be less known than the other, although what appears to be the same thing is quoted by Engelmann and

¹ On the Name of the "Auklets." By Ernst Hartert, Ph.D. *Novitates Zoologicae*. XXIII, No. 3, p. 339. December 1, 1916.