

clature is, by the process, rendered meaningless except to the favored few. The reviewer has already expressed at length his view that the groups demanded by consistency or for phylogenetic purposes can just as well be expressed as subgenera without making a plaything of our nomenclature. (Science, April 20, 1920, p. 427.) Generic subdivision seems to us, to quote Mr. Mathews' expression, even more a matter of "personal idiosyncrasy" than the coining of subspecies. We are all agreed with Mr. Mathews on the importance of recognizing differences (and resemblances too!) but it should and can be done without inconveniencing everyone else. As the instructions to the binder suggest the binding of this "Part" at the end of Volume VII we infer that "Part 2" will not appear until the work is entirely completed, by which time let us hope that our good friend the author will have adopted the same conservative stand upon genera that he has now reached in regard to subspecies.—W. S.

Mathews' 'Birds of Australia'.¹—Part I of Volume VIII appeared on May 5, 1920, and in it Mr. Mathews begins the treatment of the long list of passerine birds. The Pittidae, Atrichornithidae and Hirundinidae are completed in this number and the first species of the Muscipidae are considered.

A rather lengthy discussion of the classification of the Passeriformes begins the number which is well worth careful reading. While the author does not advance any new ideas in the classification which he adopts, he presents some rather caustic criticism of characters used and diagnoses of groups, presented by others. His principal grievance seems to be with the importance accorded to anatomical characters and after quoting a diagnosis of the family Picidae: "Feet zygodactyle; after-shaft small or elementary; oil-gland tufted. Muscle formula of leg, AXY (AX); gall bladder elongated; skull without basipterygoid processes," he says: "Surely it is time to provide some more reasonable kind of guide to bird study than such inadequate terminology," and again in referring to anatomical terms he says that they "mean little or nothing to the ornithologist who has to deal with skins and not much more to anyone else."

While we are willing to admit Mr. Mathews' contention that too much weight may have been given to certain anatomical characters and that even the structure of the syrinx in the Pittidae may not necessarily indicate any close relationship to Neotropical groups with similar structure, but may merely indicate degeneration in both instances from "oscine" types; there is still no reason why they may not have come from the same stock and represent isolated groups of a widespread type now approaching extinction. Mr. Mathews does not think, moreover, that similarity in syrinx structure should be held to unite such dissimilar-looking birds as the

¹The Birds of Australia, Witherly & Co. Vol. VIII. Part 1, May 5, 1920.

Pittas, the Philepittas of Madagascar and the Xeniscidae of New Zealand, but in the South American Tyrannidae or Formicariidae we find just as much divergence in external characters among species which we feel sure must be closely allied.

At any rate we cannot think that Mr. Mathews is really serious in the statement quoted above, regarding the work and terminology of the anatomist, since in his succeeding pages he repeatedly calls for anatomical investigation of Australian birds and states that a description of the skeletons of the principal types of Muscicapidae would be "worth much more than any series of skins." This is the true scientific spirit and we can hardly think that he would do away with the characters proposed by the anatomist merely because the terminology is meaningless to the student of skins. There is, however, much food for thought in the matter that he has discussed.—W. S.

McGregor's 'Index to the Genera of Birds.'—In 1889 appeared a work entitled 'Index Generum Avium. A List of the Genera and Subgenera of Birds,' by F. H. Waterhouse, librarian to the Zoological Society of London. For over thirty years this has constituted an indispensable work of reference to all systematic ornithologists and in 1902, 1909 and 1917 Dr. C. W. Richmond published in the 'Proceedings of the U. S. National Museum,' three supplements to it, listing not only the generic names proposed for birds in the intervening years, but a list of names overlooked by Waterhouse and another list of names given by him which are not proposed as genera or apply to other groups than birds.

Mr. McGregor¹ has now given us another volume very similar in scope to that of Waterhouse but bringing the matter up to 1917. He does not base his catalogue upon Waterhouse's 'List' but begins de novo, cataloguing successively the generic names mentioned in Bonaparte's 'Conspectus' of 1850 and 1865; Gray's 'Hand-list,' 1869-1871; the 'Catalogue of Birds of the British Museum,' 1874-1895; Sharpe's 'Hand-list,' 1899-1909; DuBois's 'Systema Avium,' 1899-1904; and Richmond's three 'Supplements' to Waterhouse. The names thus compiled were then arranged in alphabetical order and under each is given the volume and page reference to all of the above works in which it may have been mentioned, the reference being printed in heavy-faced type if the name is recognized as valid, and in light-faced type if it is given as a synonym. The author of the name does not appear, nor does the original place of publication, but from the references cited the full history of the name can usually be ascertained and these matters looked up by the investigator. As Waterhouse usually only gave one reference, and that by no means always the original one, Mr. McGregor's plan really leads us directly or indirectly to much more information regarding the name which we are investigating than did the older work. Furthermore the brevity of his references enables him to print the names in three columns to the page