

collect sight records from a large number of people with whose "personal equation" we are not familiar, we are forced to the alternative of hurting their feelings by ignoring improbable records not properly substantiated or of pleasing them by printing their records and thereby rendering our publication untrustworthy from the scientific standpoint. We have tried to discourage the publication of doubtful records and must admit that the task is a hard one and that the pages of 'The Auk' are not blameless but we always insist upon full data and the name of the responsible person. In view of all that has been said and written of late on the greater need of care and forbearance in the publication of unusual sight records it is discouraging to find such careless work in such high places.—W. S.

Witherby's Handbook of British Birds.¹—A double number of this important book, which is rapidly approaching completion, is before us, covering the Grebes, Loons, Doves, Sand Grouse and most of the Limicolae. The general plan and character of the work has been fully discussed in the reviews of the earlier parts and it only remains to say that the present installment is fully up to the standard of its predecessors. There are two half-tone plates of the downy young of various species and numerous text figures of bills, heads, wings etc.

Following the English custom the name *Podiceps* is used for the Grebes and *Colymbus* for the Loons following the designation of Gray 1855. (see antea p. 147.)

The generic standard is very conservative as may be seen from the fact that *Eudromias*, *Pluvialis*, *Oxyechus*, *Charadrius* and other less generally recognized genera are united under the last name while *Pelidna*, *Canutus* and *Erolia* are combined under *Calidris* the latter dating from "Anonymous" 1804 where it is based on the Knot. For the Sanderling *Crocethia* is employed, while under *Tringa* we find the species of *Actitis* and *Totanus*.—W. S.

Mathews' 'The Birds of Australia.'²—Volume ten of this great work begins with the genus *Sericornis* and follows with *Tasmanornis*, *Oreoscopus* and *Acanthorhis*, which have been split off from the former genus as originally understood, and a beginning is made on the genus *Malurus*, comprising the beautiful Blue Wrens so characteristic of the Australian avifauna. Several subspecies are described as new: *Sericornis laevigaster tweedi* (p. 16) Tweed River; *S. magnirostris yorki* (p. 19) Cape York; *S. maculatus inopinatus* (p. 28) New South Wales; *S. m. gouldianus* (p. 28) South Australia; and *Tasmanornis humilis archibaldi* (p. 38) North Tasmania. The author's peculiar ideas on nomenclature are well illustrated on page 1 where he erects a new subgenus *Megathiza* for the bird he calls *Sericornis magnirostris keri*, in order to emphasize the fact

¹A Practical Handbook of British Birds. Edited by H. F. Witherby. Parts XIV–XV. Vol. II, pp. 449–624. Sept. 6, 1922.

²The Birds of Australia. By Gregory M. Mathews. Vol. X. Part I. September 28, 1922, pp. 1–56 with six plates.

that its tarsi are scutellated while in *Sericornis* they are only obscurely scutellate, yet on account of other characters he considers *keri* only sub-specifically separable from a species of *Sericornis*!

The high standard of both plates and text are well maintained in the present part.—W. S.

Recent Papers by Prof. Stephens.—In the past few years Prof. T. C. Stephens has published a number of papers of interest to ornithologists. In the proceedings of the Iowa Academy (Vol. XXVII, 1920.) is an address on the taxonomic unit, in which the familiar species and subspecies question is taken up, and a protest entered against taking the latter instead of the former as the "taxonomic unit." As in the case of many others who take this stand we fear Prof. Stephens has not had sufficient practise with systematic ornithology or like the rest of us he would find it very difficult to separate the species from the subspecies. What he is really opposed to, we think, is the multiplication of subspecies and in such a protest he will have a large following. Another paper in the same journal records winter bird records in the upper Missouri Valley during 1918-1920. 'Birds and Bird Study' is the title of a series of papers in the 'Iowa Conservationist' which contain many important Iowa records and suggestions for recording data. A paper on the birds of Union County South Dakota also appeared in the Proceedings of the Iowa Academy for 1918.—W. S.

Van Oort's 'Birds of the Netherlands.'¹—The 15th part of Van Oort's Birds of the Netherlands contains the text of Volume I, pp. 153-250, with preface, title page and index, and ten plates of Hawks forming part of Volume II, including the Hobby, Sparrow Hawk, Gerfalcon, Duck Hawk etc. which are excellent representations, showing, as usual, the more important variations in plumage due to sex and age.

Volume I is now complete and covers the Colymbiformes, Procellariiformes, Pelecaniformes Ardeiformes and Anseriformes, illustrated by 87 plates.

Unfortunately for English and American ornithologists the text, which contains a mass of valuable information, is entirely in Dutch, which of course is necessary as the vast majority of readers will come from Holland, and the number from English speaking countries would not be sufficiently great to warrant an English edition. We congratulate both author and publisher upon the high standard of the work.—W. S.

Ribeiro's Vertebrate Fauna of Trinidad Island.²—The fauna of this little Brazilian Island has already been reported by Dr. Robert Cushman Murphy (Auk 1915, pp. 332-348) and the present reports list the vertebrates which he recorded and also those obtained by an expedition from the Museu Nacional at Rio Janeiro which visited the island in 1916.

¹ Ornithologia Neerlandica. De Vogels van Nederland door Dr. E. D. Van Oort. 'sGravenhage, Martinus Nijhof. Aflevering 15. November 1, 1922.

² Arch. do Museu Nacional, XXI, pp. 171-194, 6 pl.