

Shrosbree, George. A Collecting Expedition to Bonaventure Island, Quebec. (Yearbook, Milwaukee Public Museum, 1922.)—A beautifully illustrated account of an expedition by the author and H. L. Stoddard.

McAllister, M. H. The Band-tailed Pigeon in Yosemite. (California Fish and Game, July, 1923.)

Peterson, A. M. Getting Acquainted With Birds and Their Nests. (Our Dumb Animals, October, 1923.)

CORRESPONDENCE

Fisher on 'Scientific Collecting.'

Editor of 'THE AUK':

The ornithologists of the country and the fish, game and conservation commissioners are alike indebted to Dr. A. K. Fisher of the United States Bureau of Biological Survey for his 'Statement Regarding Scientific Collecting,' which appeared in the July issue of the 'Bulletin of the American Game Protective and Propagation Association.' This statement has gone far to clear up many misunderstandings, and should encourage every commissioner throughout the United States to take a liberal attitude in the encouragement of scientific research.

Dr. Fisher is correct in every particular when he states that no program of conservation will be of value or enduring unless it is founded on scientific research. We who are actively in the work have seen this time and time again. It stands to reason that unless we know the habits of a given species, the diseases to which it is susceptible, the mating periods, the proper environment for both breeding grounds and rearing grounds, together with some check on the increase or decrease, we cannot intelligently proceed.

Very few of the states have highly trained biologists in active connection with the work. Very few have the same facilities for study and observation as are supplied by the ornithologists of the country. Certainly there is no other source of information as complete as that offered by the Bureau of Biological Survey, the great museums of the country, and such organizations as the American Ornithologists' Union, the Nuttall Ornithological Club, etc.

If there is any criticism of the activities of the ornithologists up to the present time, it should be along the lines that they have failed through their organizations to be of as much practical assistance to the commissioners throughout the country as they might be were their activities given more publicity, and were a part of their researches directed along certain practical lines in conformity with a program laid out to cover a period of years.

It is a well known fact, for example, that the Ruffed Grouse go through a cycle which ranges from a period of great scarcity to one of reasonable abundance. The real cause of this is today unknown. You can obtain

almost as many theories as to why it occurs as there are ornithologists and commissioners. When it comes down to fundamentals, we do not know.

If the ornithologists could so completely organize and lay a program of research which would extend over a period of years, taking up certain problems such as the life cycle of the Ruffed Grouse, the recurrence of certain diseases, such as those which affect the Quail from time to time, together with some of the problems of artificial propagation of our game birds, the commissioners would derive some direct and specific assistance in carrying on their work. A good case in point is the activities of the American Fisheries Society. In addition to the scientific research of a rather highly specialized character, the members of this society are also conducting investigations into the feeding of fish and the control of fish diseases. At the recent meeting in St. Louis, a substantial portion of the three days' program was devoted entirely to a discussion of these two propositions. The results were of immediate benefit to all of us who are grappling with these problems every day. If the ornithologists of the country could, as part of their program of research, have a division devoted to such investigations as indicated above so that annually the commissioners could have a contribution which would be of immediate help, it would go a long way toward removing any misunderstandings which today exist. It is something of a surprise to us in Massachusetts that Dr. Fisher intimates antagonism by certain commissioners and the sportsmen in certain states to the activities of scientific collectors, for the reason that no such opposition exists in this state, either in the Conservation Department or in the minds of the sportsmen. At any rate such an attitude by the sportsmen has never been manifested. Several years ago I called together the ornithologists of the country, in so far as they could come to Boston, for a conference on what should be the policy of our Department in the matter of issuing permits to take birds and eggs for scientific purposes. About sixty men attended. They ranged in ages from men still in college to white-bearded men in the seventies. I asked that every man in the room stand up who was interested in bird collecting before he reached the age of ten years and every man in the room stood. Certain interesting facts came out in the discussion, embodied in the conclusion that a state should be liberal in issuing these permits, that there were not enough younger men turning to these fields to keep up the work already started. That if young men and women were to be encouraged they should have the opportunity to start young. That they should be stimulated by being permitted to collect their own material. That this part of the work was most valuable in getting them outdoors and in close touch with the elementary steps in scientific collecting and observing. That the mere study of specimens already preserved was not sufficient. It was even stated by one member that one of the largest educational institutions of the country had delayed in sending out certain scientific expeditions for the

reason that no young men were available who had had the necessary training. It was agreed that permits were not to be handed out indifferently to all youngsters who applied for them, but only in those cases where a real interest was shown, and then with the provision that the apprentices would work under the direction of some recognized ornithologist. This would not only be to the student's advantage, but would be a safeguard against any injudicious acts. These conclusions have been our guide in Massachusetts. We have issued a number of permits under the arrangement that the student would work with some recognized collector who would vouch for him. Our scientific institutions are encouraged to come to us with their problems. Not with the idea that we can supply highly trained men to work out a solution, but that we may do all in our power to assist scientists in their investigations.

The conservation commissioners throughout the country to a man should be squarely behind the ornithologists to help them in every possible way to carry on their investigations. Dr. Fisher has made it perfectly plain that the number of specimens taken is only a drop in the bucket compared to the losses to our wild life resulting from other causes. We should not lose sight of the fact that those specimens taken for science are not lost. They do not go down the gullet, but into the brain, and eventually we are all rewarded by growing contributions to that fund of exact knowledge on which the hopes of our work must be based. The ornithologists in return must conduct a portion of their researches along lines which will help in every-day problems. This teamwork exists today in our state. It should exist in every state in the Union. WILLIAM C. ADAMS, *Director, Div. of Fisheries and Game, Mass. Dept. Conservation.*

NOTES AND NEWS.

In the present Congress the Federal Public Shooting Ground and Game Refuge Bill which was defeated by a few votes in the last Congress, will be reintroduced. The Secretary of Agriculture, the American Game Protective Association and all true sportsmen have endorsed it and members of the A. O. U. should use their influence with their representatives to secure its passage.

Judge Lee Miles explains its provisions in the November issue of 'American Forestry' and Mr. Ray P. Holland in the October number of the 'Bulletin of the American Game Protection Association.'

Briefly the purpose is to establish a federal license fee of one dollar on hunters of migratory game birds, the funds so secured to be devoted (1) to the purchase or rental of areas of water and marsh land to prevent their destruction by drainage and to make them perpetual public shooting grounds in the open season and protected game refuges at other times, and (2) to the enforcement of the provision of the migratory bird treaty.