

Stoner, Dayton. The Toll of the Automobile. (Science, January 16, 1925.)—A list of the species of birds, mammals and reptiles found dead along automobile roads in Iowa. On roads where the surface was good and speeding was possible the mortality was greatest, and on such a road 105 dead animals were counted in traversing 211 miles, 39 of them being Red-headed Woodpeckers, 53 of which were found dead on two successive automobile trips.

Corsan, George. How Birds Saved My Trees. (American Forests and Forest Life, February, 1925.)

Oliver, Douglas. A Missionary to Bird Land. (American Forests and Forest Life, January, 1925.)—An Account of Jack Miner and his Geese.

Pearson, T. Gilbert. Conservative Conservation. (National Asso. of Audubon Societies. Circular 9.)

Pearson, T. Gilbert. Is American Game Protection a Success? (National Asso. of Audubon Societies, Circular 8.)

Norton, Arthur H. The Semipalmated Sandpiper in Aroostook Co. (Maine Naturalist, IV, No. 4.)

Norton, Arthur H. Notes on the Birds of the Knox County Region (continued). (Maine Naturalist, IV, No. 4, pp. 95-110.)

Lermond, N. W. Black Skimmer taken in Knox Co. (Maine Naturalist, IV, No. 4.)

Berlioz, J. Study of a Collection of Hummingbirds obtained by Capt. d'Espinay in the vicinity of Quito, Ecuador. (Bull. Mus. Nat. Hist. Nat. 1924, No. 3.) [In French.]

CORRESPONDENCE.

"Danger in Bird Traps."

Editor of 'The Auk':

My attention has been directed to the letter from Prof. Wm. Rowan, of the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, and which appeared in 'The Auk' for January, 1925. The communication deals with bird fatalities due to imperfectly constructed traps and suggests the appointment of "a committee for the purpose of considering all aspects of bird banding activities," etc.

The basis of Prof. Rowan's contentions are his own experiences with the so-called Government Sparrow Trap as described in U. S. Department of Agriculture Circular No. 170, and the data contained in U. S. Department of Agriculture Bulletin No. 1268, entitled "Returns from Banded Birds, 1920 to 1923."

It is evident that the trap used by Prof. Rowan is defective in that "small wire ends" project inwardly at the edges of the trap. He is in error however, in stating that these "appear to be unavoidable," in fact, I fail to see any reason for leaving any wire ends projecting into the trap chambers. Three or four years ago the Biological Survey had made in the shops of the Department of Agriculture two experimental traps, using the exact specifications contained in Circular 170. In these traps there are no free ends of the wire netting projecting into the chambers.

There is however, a difficulty with this or any other cage trap made of half-inch mesh hardware cloth. Unless removed immediately (and even a careful and conscientious operator may be unable to make the rounds of his traps more often than once in two or three hours) some birds—particularly Sparrows and Finches—will so persistently force their bills through the netting as to cause severe abrasions at the base of the bill. This trouble was early recognized and measures were taken for its correction. The remedy was fully described in Bird Banding Notes No. 1, issued April 15, 1922, and when Department Circular No. 170 was superseded by Miscellaneous Circular No. 18, issued in May, 1924, this information was made an integral part of the specifications of the Government Sparrow Trap. (Page 5.) Briefly, this difficulty is remedied by placing a narrow strip of fine screen or netting along the lower portion of the sides of the trap chambers. Ordinary window screening will answer but the galvanized netting of $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch mesh is preferable as it does not appreciably reduce the amount of light entering the chambers. With this netting in place and all joints made smooth on the *inside*, the percentage of injuries to birds captured in traps of this character, will be reduced almost to nothing. As previously stated, this strip of fine netting should be found on all traps of the cage type.

It must however, be remembered that bird banding as practiced under the direction of the Biological Survey, is an entirely new method of investigation, and we are still passing through a transitional period, involving a great deal of experimental work. Prof. Rowan refers to certain European bird banding projects and suggests the desirability of corresponding "with Rossitten, London, Aberdeen and other well known banding centers." As a matter of fact the Biological Survey is in touch with all the major banding projects now in progress in Europe. These, however, are only two in number, that of British Birds Magazine, and that of the German Ornithological Society which maintains (with the aid of the German government) the stations of Heligoland and Rossitten. The work at Aberdeen University was discontinued some time ago as was that at Viborg, Denmark, and with the exception of those previously mentioned, other projects are too small to be of importance. The project under the direction of British Birds Magazine is easily the largest and in 1913—four years after the work was started—they reported a total of about 15,000 birds banded. This number has not since been

equaled, due of course, to the war. For purposes of comparison, I may refer to the fiscal year 1924 (July 1, 1923 to June 30, 1924), and which also was the fourth year of the bird banding work under the Biological Survey. In that year over 40,000 birds were banded or almost three times as many as were banded in the banner year of the largest European project. This, I think, should demonstrate the fallacy of attempting to compare the work done in North America with that in the Old World. Furthermore, no European project has applied on a large scale, the method of systematic trapping although a few workers in England, Scotland, and Hungary have used cage traps to capture birds and have obtained returns in this manner.

Prof. Rowan also cites the data in Department Bulletin 1268 that are marked with a dagger as possible supporting evidence to his claims. There was considerable question regarding the advisability of including in the tables these records, because it was foreseen that lacking complete information regarding each case, this very question might be brought up. It is believed that these records will prove of service in determining percentage rates of mortality among birds, and it must be stated that our cooperators have evidenced a most commendable frankness and candidness in admitting accidents that were due to their own carelessness, inexperience, or the use of improperly constructed traps. So apparently honest have been these reports that I cannot agree with Prof. Rowan in assuming that there are many cases where the cause of death is based entirely upon conjecture. There are, it is true, cases where the causes of death were unknown to the operator but they are almost always so marked..

To take the example selected by Prof. Rowan (page 40 of Bulletin 1268) I find that the following additional information is contained in the bird banding files: Killed by cats, 5; by shrikes, 3; by squirrels, 3; by hawk, 1; shot, 1; by pull-string trap, 3; injury from band, bird killed by operator, 1; heart failure (fright ?), 1; unknown, 9. The number of unknown causes, is certainly evidence of the desire on the part of station operators to make their reports accurate. Most of the records on this page of birds killed by cats, are from the station of Mr. Wm. I. Lyon, of Waukegan, Ill., who has had a great deal of trouble from these animals as the grounds of his station are very large with abundant cover for both birds and small predatory animals. He has however, been able to effectually control their depredations.

In conclusion, I may say that my assistants who are in direct charge of the bird banding work are "*scientifically trained*" biologists, and the Biological Survey has made an effort to see that the officers and councilors of the various regional associations, include the leading ornithologists of the area. Even if they are unable to actively participate in the work, their advice is greatly desired. The Bureau is fully aware that mistakes are inevitable in the development of a new project and we will always

welcome constructive criticism either of the methods employed or our interpretation of the results obtained, but it is my belief that the better way will be to bring such matters direct to the attention of this office.

Very truly yours,

E. W. NELSON,
Chief of Bureau.

*U. S. Dept. Agriculture,
Bureau of Biological Survey,
Washington, D. C.
February 28, 1925.*

NOTES AND NEWS.

ON February 15, the vacancies in the various classes of members were as follows: Fellows 1, Honorary Fellows 2, Corresponding Fellows 11 and Members 2.

IN this issue appears the list of Deceased Members of the Union which is published once in five years. Since the last list appeared in 1920 there have been 88 additions including the names of 6 Fellows, 4 Honorary Fellows, 21 Corresponding Fellows, 3 Members and 54 Associates. A perusal of this list containing many names well known both in this country and abroad is well worth while. The Fellows who have died during the last five years include three Founders, Allen, Bicknell and Cory; two others elected at the first meeting, Barrows and Dutcher; and William Palmer elected in 1888. A comparison of the lists in the four classes of limited membership brings out several facts of interest. The Fellows and Members are restricted to 150 and the Honorary and Corresponding Fellows to 125 but the deaths among the Fellows, Retired Fellows and Members since the organization of the Union number only 40—a small proportion when compared with the total of 108 among the Foreign Fellows.—T. S. P.

DR. CHARLES BINGHAM PENROSE, of Philadelphia, a life Associate of the A. O. U., died on February 27, 1925, on a train near Washington, D. C., while returning from Aiken, S. C., where he had been spending the winter. He had been in poor health for some years and his condition had recently become critical.

Dr. Penrose was born in Philadelphia on February 1, 1862, the son of Dr. Richard Alexander Fullerton Penrose, one of the City's most noted physicians and for many years professor at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, and his ancestry can be traced back to many noted figures in the early history of the country. His grandmother was an aunt of Prof. Spencer Fullerton Baird and from another ancestor came the LeContes