

CORRESPONDENCE.**A Plea for the Evidence.**

Editor of 'The Auk':

It is undeniable that the value of any conclusion depends primarily upon the nature and extent of the evidence from which it is drawn. This is no less true in science than in law. The counsel who asserted the innocence of his client but withheld the grounds for his belief would doubtless lose his case. The physicist or biologist who advanced an original theory but refused to present the data on which it was based would not be taken seriously.

Why then should not the systematic zoölogist support his opinion by presenting the evidence on which it rests? "A" describes a new race and in a line or two tells us it is paler or darker, larger or smaller than some other, gives one set of measurements, names a type, and a form is born to live forever in nomenclature.

The describer does not tell us whether he had more than one specimen of the proposed new bird, he makes no mention of comparison with topotypical examples of allied races, in short, he withholds his evidence. In this day of fine "splitting," when the ascribed differences are often within the range of individual variation, the importance of adding to the diagnosis of a new form, a list of the "Specimens Examined" is too obvious to require comment. Many systematists indeed follow this admirable method but there is a regrettably large number who do not employ it. It is to them I address this plea to follow a procedure which will increase the value of their labors, do justice to themselves, and add credit to the technique of descriptive zoölogy.

Lest I be accused of undue discrimination I am sending this letter to 'The Ibis' as well as to 'The Auk.'

Yours sincerely,

FRANK M. CHAPMAN.

*American Museum of
Natural History New York City,
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" Out of Print "

Editor of 'The Auk':

A disappointing thing to the new generation is to know that many of the supremely good and valuable classics in ornithological literature will probably never be available to them. If the writer were able to do so, he would consider going into the publishing business for the sole purpose of specializing in the republishing of out of print works, which should be continually available to newcomers in ornithology. Could not some publishing house make a financial success of a republishing of the text of Audubon in a good form, when bird students and others interested number many times more now than formerly, as is indicated by the