

based. Mr. Todd records seventeen species and nine additional subspecies of which *S. sanctaecrucis* (p. 47) from Samarpata, Bolivia; *S. peruvianus paulus* (p. 51) from the Andes of southern Ecuador and northern Peru; *S. magellanicus tucumanus* (p. 65) from Santiago del Estero Argentina and *S. m. urubambinus* (p. 65) from Urubamba Valley, Peru, are described as new, while females have been examined which undoubtedly represent two additional forms though in the absence of male specimens Mr. Todd wisely refrains from naming them. Besides the systematic consideration of the group Mr. Todd's study has led him into the broader problems of geographic distribution. He calls especial attention to the discontinuous distribution of several of the species of South American Goldfinches which he considers indicates antiquity of origin and dispersal, and the occurrence of several species in the same area indicating that they have no immediate relationship but were differentiated before their ranges overlapped.

Spinus is thus on many counts a plastic genus adapting itself easily to changing environment and probably for that reason is the only Palae-arctic Finch genus to reach South America. The forms with the least black on the head our author regards as the most primitive, *S. xanthoptera* he considers a derivative of *Astragalinus psaltria* a species obviously of North American origin and upon this as well as other grounds he proposes to merge *Astragalinus* and *Spinus*, a conclusion reached independently by the A. O. U. Sub-committee on classification for the new Check-List.

Mr. Todd finds it very difficult to account for the presence of the various species of *Spinus* in South America on the basis of Asiatic derivation via the Behring Strait land bridge, and is inclined to favor a land bridge from the West Indies to the Mediterranean countries of Europe as proposed by Scharff, over which this genus, he thinks, must have come in several invasions.

Mr. Todd has prepared a notable systematic paper and his broader philosophical deductions are worthy of serious consideration, for there are other similar instances among South American birds which strongly support his contentions.—W. S.

The Australian Check-List.¹—In 'The Auk' for April, 1913, the present reviewer published a notice of the official 'Checklist' of the birds of Australia prepared by a committee of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union and he has now before him the second edition of the same work. Of the seven members of the original committee but four are included among the fourteen who had to do with the preparation of the present list and two of these took part only in the earlier activities.

Our criticism of the first edition was mainly against the adoption of

¹ The Official Checklist of the Birds of Australia, Compiled by a Committee of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union. Second and Revised Edition. With Appendix, Scientific Names—Notes and Pronunciation. By H. Wolstenholme, B.A., M. B. O. U., R. A. O. U. Wahroonga, Sydney. Published by the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union. 1926. pp. i-x, + 1-212 with 1 map Price 12 shillings 6 pence. [376 Flinders St., Melbourne.]

Gould's works as a starting point for Australian nomenclature and the failure to accept the International Zoological Code in the attempt to save "time honored names."—On these points the present committee has completely reversed the action of its predecessor adopting rigidly the principle of priority and accepting the International Code, a policy upon which we offer hearty congratulations.

This action has brought the specific nomenclature of the 'Checklist' and that of Mr. G. M. Mathews' works into accord, while the generic nomenclature is also virtually in agreement, since, while with admirable judgment the committee has adhered to the broader genera of old, it has entered Mr. Mathews' innumerable subdivisions as subgenera.

Another criticism in our former review was the failure of the original committee to properly grasp the character of a subspecies and the lack of any indication as to the disposition that had been made of the numerous subspecific names proposed in recent years. While the new 'Checklist' like its predecessor is strictly binomial and recognizes "species" only, it has in the interests of consistency eliminated some of the "species" of the first edition which have proven to be only geographical races, thereby reducing the total number from 751 to 707, and what is more important has entered all of the subspecies in the synonymy of their respective species listing them in the index so that the disposition of any one of them may easily be ascertained.

The new list therefore meets all of the criticisms that were directed against its predecessor and forms an excellent 'Checklist' of the *species* of Australian birds, which will be of the utmost value to Australian students as well as those of other countries and will fit in with the nomenclature of the more general works based as they all are upon the same principles of nomenclature.

We have but one objection, or better perhaps, suggestion, and that refers to the arrangement of the synonyms, a point to which we have repeatedly called attention in reviewing Mathews' 'Birds of Australia,' i. e., the intermingling of real synonyms and subspecific names. The 'Checklist' purports to list as synonyms all names used for a species or any part of it in publications on Australian birds, and we thus have side by side names that are absolute equivalents of the specific name, and names for several perfectly distinct geographical races (subspecies), with no possible means of distinguishing the "sheep from the goats."

Subspecies are of the utmost importance in studies of migration, distribution, the origin and development of faunas etc.—problems entirely apart from the purely systematic listing and cataloguing of eggs or skins, or the study of life histories, where we are ready to admit subspecies become a nuisance—and the progressive student of Australian ornithology will demand that the valid subspecies be worked out and their ranges given. Perhaps this is not feasible as yet, but it should at once be taken up seriously, as it will be one of the major requirements of the "third edition" of the 'Check-List' whenever that may appear.

We regret that the cost of publication has necessitated the use of many abbreviations in locality, ranges and references to standard works, but these will be easily mastered by those who constantly use the list.

An appendix by Mr. H. Wolstenholme contains an explanation of the binomial system, with notes on the origin of various names and a vocabulary of Latin and Greek words used in the construction of the technical names. Also an index of proper names with their origin marked and accented to indicate their correct pronunciation. An excellent outline map of Australia shows all the type localities, the railways, river systems and lines of average temperature.

The Committee has done an excellent piece of work and has placed Australian systematic ornithology on the same basis as that of the rest of the world.—W. S.

A Chinese Checklist.—Under the editorship of three well known writers on Chinese birds—N. Gist Gee, Lacey I. Moffett and G. D. Wilder there has appeared the first part of 'A Tentative List of Chinese Birds'¹ covering apparently all but the Passeres and enumerating 460 species as well as many subspecies which are numbered "a", "b", "c" etc. the "species" bearing the serial number.

Under each technical name is given a vernacular name in English and several Chinese names. Then comes the general distribution of the species printed in English and Chinese; the provinces of China in which it has been recorded; and the time of year. While the authority is given for each technical name there are no references whatever to publications.

"This list," say the authors, "does not claim to be complete. It is published in this imperfect form as a working basis for further study, in the hope that corrections and additions will be made until there shall result a satisfactory checklist of the birds of China." In spite of this modest statement the list seems to be an admirable piece of work, well printed and well prepared. With it and LaTouche's 'Handbook of the Birds of Eastern China' the student of Chinese birds is placed in a position to pursue his studies with an ease that could not have been expected a few years ago.

We congratulate the authors upon their admirable beginning of the 'Chinese Checklist' and wish them every success in their undertaking.—W. S.

Hachisuka on Egyptian Birds.—A handsome volume by M. Hachisuka has recently appeared, obviously dealing with the birds of Egypt, of which 455 species and subspecies are listed. With the exception of the scientific names, the bibliography and the index, the entire work is in Japanese, so that we are unable to comment upon its contents, but as the

¹ Bulletin of the Peking Society of Natural History. Technical Series, No. 1, part 1. A Tentative List of Chinese Birds, Part 1, from Colymbiformes through Coraciiformes. Compiled by N. Gist Gee, Peking, Lacy I. Moffett, Kiangyin, G. D. Wilder, Peking. 1926. pp. 1-viii + 1-144.