

CORRESPONDENCE

THE EUROPEAN WIDGEON IN NORTH AMERICA

EDITOR OF 'THE AUK':—

The thesis of Dr. E. M. Hasbrouck's recent article on the European Widgeon in North America (Auk, 61: 93, 1944), that this species probably breeds somewhere in the New World because of the widespread records of its occurrence, appears sound. But his listing of only thirty-two reports (including fourteen sight records) from eastern New York and Long Island gives a very inadequate notion of the bird's status. In fact, on Long Island the European Widgeon has for many years been a regular winter resident and spring and fall migrant, which can be seen on any winter day by merely going to one of its favorite haunts, such as the Hempstead Reservoir and the adjacent ponds. Cruickshank in his 'Birds Around New York City': 94-95, 1942, points out that it "now occurs every year as a transient and winter visitant . . . Though generally occurring singly or in twos or threes, there have been extraordinary flights on Long Island when I have seen as many as fourteen in a day . . . In recent years I have regularly found at least one drake on the Hempstead Reservoir from late October to late March." Off Long Island the bird is rare around New York, but occasionally occurs even in the urban parks, *viz.*, drakes have been seen in Van Cortlandt and Bronx Parks this very winter.

There may be significance in the circumstance that the local status of that other supposed accidental, the European Teal, has until very recently resembled that of the Widgeon, even the same waters being favored (Cruickshank, *t.c.*: 98-99, 1942). But since 1941, unlike the Widgeon, the Teal's numbers have drastically diminished, and in 1943 not a single one was reported in the region, though its usual haunts had been frequently visited by many observers.

EUGENE EISENMANN

New York, N. Y.

THE POSSESSIVE IN VERNACULAR NAMES

EDITOR OF 'THE AUK':—

The possessive case has been used in all editions of the Check-List of the American Ornithologists' Union to date in vernacular names of birds indicating ascription to an individual. In practically all cases their origin is in a technical name but not necessarily that recognized as standard by the Committee on Classification and Nomenclature. While scientific nomenclature is not the Latin language, rules harmonious with the practices of that language are observed in forming technical names. Thus if a bird is named for, or in honor of, or is dedicated to, an individual, the technical name is a Latinization of the person's name, employing the genitive case. On the other hand, the vernacular names are regarded as part of the English language.

It would prevent confusion if it were realized that the English possessive is equivalent to the Latin genitive. Consider what our best dictionaries have to say on the point. As a definition of "genitive," the Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia (1913 ed., vol. 4) states: "an epithet applied to a case in the declension of nouns, adjectives, pronouns, etc., which in English is called the possessive case, or to the relation expressed by such a case: as *patris*, 'of a father, a father's,' is the genitive case of the Latin noun *pater*, a father . . . a case in the declension of