

### NOTES AND NEWS

Robert P. Allen has been awarded the John Burroughs Medal by the John Burroughs Association for distinguished nature writing, particularly his book "On the Trail of Vanishing Birds."

Ernst Mayr was awarded the Silver Medal of the Linnean Society of London in connection with the celebration of the Darwin-Wallace Centennial by the XVth International Congress of Zoology, held at London in July, 1958.

Roger T. Peterson has been awarded the Geoffroy Saint Hilaire Gold Medal of the Société d'Acclimatation et de Protection de la Nature, leading conservation organization of France, for his work in promoting knowledge and protection of birds, chiefly through his European field guide.

The next International Ornithological Congress will be held in the United States in 1962. Dr. Ernst Mayr will serve as president.

Mr. Francis Hemming, Honorary Secretary to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature since 1936, has retired on account of ill-health. Mr. R. V. Melville of the Palaeontological staff of the Geological Survey, London, England, has been appointed Secretary to the International Commission.

#### **A Reminder: The 1958 A.O.U. Meeting**

The 75th Anniversary Meeting of the A.O.U. will be held in New York on October 14-19. A symposium by leading foreign ornithologists is planned as one of the features.

Those expecting to attend the meeting may be interested in a leaflet, "Birds of the New York City Area" by John L. Bull, just published by the American Museum of Natural History, New York (85 cents).

Members of the A.O.U. are invited by the New Jersey Audubon Society to attend the Annual Cape May Nature Weekend, October 10-13, 1958—the weekend immediately preceding the A.O.U. meeting in New York. Information can be obtained from the New Jersey Audubon Society, Ewing Avenue, Franklin Lakes, N. J.

#### **Membership List Available**

While they last, members of the A.O.U. may obtain a reprint in pamphlet form of the membership list published in the October, 1957 issue, by writing to the Treasurer and forwarding the price of \$1.00. Membership lists are ordinarily published only at three-year intervals.

The Division of Biological and Medical Sciences of the National Science Foundation announces that the next closing date for receipt of basic research proposals in the life sciences is September 15, 1958. Proposals received prior to that date will be reviewed at the Fall meetings of the Foundation's Advisory Panels and disposition will be made approximately four months following the closing date. Proposals received after the September 15, 1958, closing date will be reviewed following the Winter closing date of January 15, 1959.

Inquiries should be addressed to the National Science Foundation, Washington 25, D. C.

**Editor of 'The Auk':**

The difference between species and subspecies leaves much ground for differences of opinion. In the A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds, Fifth Edition, 1957, species are given English names, but subspecies are not. In previous check-lists subspecies had English names and species did not. Those of us who are studying live birds in the field, as well as bird lovers who merely keep lists of the birds they have seen, need English names. Ordinarily they do not need them for subspecies. A Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*), for example, is a Song Sparrow, and the slight differences in coloration and measurements that determine its numerous subspecies do not concern the field student.

The two species of Meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna* and *S. neglecta*) would probably be considered only subspecies if the songs and call-notes were not so different and so noticeable. The same is true of the Eastern and Western Wood Pewees (*Contopus virens* and *C. sordidulus*). The Yellow-shafted and Red-shafted Flickers (*Colaptes auratus* and *C. cafer*) are different in plumage, but, in my experience, not different in call-notes, song or courtship habits. But they are considered distinct species and the intermediate individuals are considered hybrids.

The eastern and western forms of the Rufous-sided Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) differ very much in both plumage and song, but are now considered to be one species. Intermediate birds are deemed not hybrids, but intergrades. Any bird student acquainted with only one form of this species, but wishing to know the marked difference should consult Pough (Audubon Bird Guide to Eastern Land Birds, 1946) and look at plate 37. Anyone who wishes to know the difference in songs and calls must go where the live birds are found and listen to them, for bird skins do not sing (Saunders, 'The Relation of Field Characters to the Question of Species and Subspecies,' *AUK*, **53**: 283).

Whether the eastern and western forms are two species or one is a matter of opinion, but because they are distinguishable by sight and sound in the field, we need distinctive English names, such as Eastern Towhee and Spotted Towhee. There are other borderline cases, such as that of the Red-breasted Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius ruber*), treated as conspecific with the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*S. v. varius*). These are different from the Song Sparrow, whose subspecies cannot be definitely distinguished by field observers.

ARETAS A. SAUNDERS

Canaan, Conn., May 21, 1958.

**Ed. Note:** Most students agree that the A.O.U. Check-list Committee effected a useful reform in providing English names for species, rather than for subspecies. At times it would certainly be convenient to have an A.O.U. vernacular for a distinctive form (or groups of forms), currently treated as a subspecies, about whose specific status there is uncertainty or substantial dispute. One can see, however, that the Committee might have encountered considerable disagreement in deciding which forms fell within that category, and, as a matter of policy, the Committee wished to place emphasis on the species entity. After all, the technical names are available, and one can always use a geographic or descriptive designation to make distinctions between populations.

Frontiers of Science Foundation of Oklahoma, Inc., Republic Building, Oklahoma City, offers research grants to investigators in the fields of natural sciences and science education working in Oklahoma.

Yale University is erecting a new building to house the Yale Ornithology Laboratory, including the William Robertson Coe Memorial Ornithology Collection. Occupancy is expected by January, 1959.