

REPORT OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE FOR 1959

Four items of special interest are here considered. A preliminary statement was made concerning each item to the A.O.U. Council at the Regina meeting, and the following report embodies the discussion that ensued.

1. The duties of the Research Committee are to foster and encourage ornithological research. In this connection the Committee wishes to be of more active service in assisting isolated investigators or those planning research in new fields to get acquainted with existing knowledge and methodology. Members of the A.O.U. are urged to communicate with the Committee whenever help is needed or when they have suggestions to offer on current problems. In order for this mutual interchange of ideas to develop, the Council agreed to the publication of the annual reports of the Committee in *The Auk*, subject to the approval of the editor.

2. The suggestion that the Committee collect and dispense information on unpublished Ph.D. theses and on research in progress has been studied, but no action is contemplated at the present time. Attention is called to *Dissertation Abstracts*, published by University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan. This is a monthly publication that contains condensed summaries of completed Ph.D. theses that have been microfilmed and titles of theses that have been accepted for the degree but not microfilmed. A large and increasing number of our leading universities are participating in this service, and copies of the publication are available in their libraries.

3. There is a strong feeling among many bird workers that abstracting of ornithological papers, recently published, is inefficient, scattered, and unorganized. There is considerable duplication of effort with abstracts of the same papers being prepared by different persons and published in separate journals such as *The Auk*, *Bird-Banding*, *Wildlife Review*, *Biological Abstracts*, *Zoological Record* (titles only), as well as various foreign periodicals. Each journal emphasizes certain aspects to the exclusion of others.

There would be many advantages for the serious researcher to have complete coverage of current literature centralized in one publication. This would facilitate locating material, avoid wasteful duplication of effort, and would free additional pages in the various journals for publishing original papers. For instance, the 1958 volume of *The Auk* contained 40 pages of "Recent Literature." This space, if available, would have permitted publishing four more leading articles of the length that was average for this volume. A large number of the articles abstracted were from the *Wilson Bulletin*, *Condor*, *Journal of*

Wildlife Management, etc., that many of The Auk readers have already read in the original, and it is doubtful if more than a small percentage of the remaining abstracts are not duplicated elsewhere.

On the other hand, "Recent Literature" is undoubtedly of interest to some readers, especially those who do not regularly subscribe to other journals with abstracting services. To them, this section is an important asset of The Auk.

Opinion was definitely divided among those participating in the discussion at Regina concerning the desirability of limiting all abstracting to one central agency, with the possible elimination of the section of "Recent Literature" from The Auk. The Research Committee was encouraged to look into the matter further. *We would be glad to have an expression of opinion from A.O.U. members generally.* In this connection it should be kept clearly in mind that the section on "Reviews" is not in question. Reviews of books and important articles, where there is critical evaluation of subject matter, are very valuable, and such evaluations by several persons are very desirable.

4. The Committee has no enthusiasm for preparing another volume of "Recent Advances in Avian Biology," such as was published in 1955. As an alternative the committee recommends publication in The Auk of individual review papers covering special fields and of symposia centering around some special theme in which several specialists would contribute shorter papers. The Council gave general consent to this proposal, subject to approval of the editor of The Auk.

Topics that have been suggested for such reviews and symposia are: avian genetics, molt patterns, diurnal migration, limitation of population size, energy requirements, evolution of behavior patterns, endocrinology, comparative developmental rates of young, marine ecology, biochemical criteria for taxonomy, and niche analysis. Doubtlessly other suitable topics will occur to our readers. The committee invites correspondence on this proposal, especially from persons who may be interested in participating.

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