

NOTES AND NEWS

The American Ornithologists' Union will meet 5-9 September 1966 at Duluth, Minnesota, as guests of the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union; the Biology Department, University of Minnesota, Duluth; and the Duluth Bird Club. Registration will be open from 10 A.M. to 8 P.M. on Monday 5 September and from 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday in the Kirby Student Center Lobby. Scientific sessions will be held Tuesday through Thursday 6-8 September in the Education 80 Auditorium.

A Circular of Information providing details of the meeting and a formal call for papers by the Committee on the Scientific Program (Chairman: Dr. Robert A. McCabe, 424 University Farm Place, Madison, Wisconsin) will be circulated to the A.O.U. Membership by late April.

Meetings of the Fellows and of the Fellows and Elective Members will be held in the afternoon and evening, respectively, on Monday 5 September. The Council will hold its first meeting at 9 A.M. Monday morning 5 September. The Annual Banquet will be held Thursday evening 8 September. Field trips are planned for Friday 9 September.

The Laboratory of Ornithology, at Cornell University, announces that the first year of the North American Nest-record Card Program went very well. The Laboratory mailed over 45,000 cards to individuals and regional centers from Florida to Alaska and over 23,000 completed cards were received from 700 individuals. Now on hand are over 500 cards for the Eastern Phoebe, Tree and Barn swallows, House Wren, Catbird, Eastern Bluebird, Common Grackle, and Red-winged Blackbird. The last has been selected for a computer trial and data from 2,300 cards on that species are being punched onto IBM cards.

The principal aim of the program is to accumulate a large number of data on the breeding biology of birds of the entire North American continent. These data will be stored on IBM cards in a form ready for analysis and, once processed, will be available to researchers interested in such areas of avian biology as annual and geographic variation in breeding seasons, clutch size, fledging periods, and nesting success. It is hoped that the program will also play a key role in the study of man's modification of his environment through marsh drainage, urbanization, and the use of pesticides.

Data are needed from all parts of the country, from city parks and backyards, of common species, as urgently as from remote parts of the continent. The cooperation of all competent field observers is needed. Individuals are asked to get in touch with local organizations and learn if they are cooperating as regional centers. If they are not, new club efforts may be organized. Individuals may also obtain cards directly from the Laboratory. In any case, those interested are asked to write to NORTH AMERICAN NEST-RECORD CARD PROGRAM, LABORATORY OF ORNITHOLOGY, 33 SIPSUCKER WOODS ROAD, ITHACA, NEW YORK 14850, including zip code with return address.

The original records of the Bird Survey Committee of the Detroit Audubon Society are filed in the Library of the CRANBROOK INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE, BLOOMFIELD HILLS, MICHIGAN 48013 (to which requests for information should be addressed), and are available for ornithological research.

The records consist (1) of 33,000 detailed individual nest cards for the 148 species

known to breed in the Detroit-Windsor area, filed by species in chronological order 1945-65; (2) report forms submitted by individual observers showing the numbers, dates, and localities of all birds observed, filed by season 1947-65; and (3) "species sheets" for the 10 years (1945-54) of a survey reported in 1963.

The Detroit Audubon Society and the Cranbrook Institute of Science hope that these records will find much use.

J. Delacour and D. Amadon of The American Museum of Natural History are writing a monograph on the family Cracidae and would welcome unpublished information.

We have learned with regret of the death in Dorset, England, of Mr. Wilfred Backhouse Alexander on December 18, 1965 in his eighty-first year. A Corresponding Fellow of the A.O.U., Mr. Alexander was known to two generations of ornithologists for his unique and useful *Birds of the ocean*, first published in 1928.

Mr. W. Lee Chambers, Fellow of the A.O.U., and for many years a pillar of the Cooper Ornithological Society, passed away peacefully at Topanga, California, on January 8, 1966, in his eighty-seventh year.

His many friends will regret the passing, on February 12, 1966, in Savannah, Georgia, of Mr. Ivan R. Tompkins, Elective Member of the A.O.U. and an active student of southeastern ornithology.

CORRESPONDENCE

Sir:

In reference to M. Foster's contribution (*Auk*, 82: 651-653, 1965) on techniques for calling owls, the section of Wordsworth's *Prelude* referring to human mimicry of owls was completed in 1804, not 1805 (M. Moorman, *William Wordsworth*. Oxford, University Press, 1957-65; see Vol. II, pp. 1 ff.), though in view of the poet's methods of working, many portions may have been written earlier. Wordsworth was referring to himself though he acknowledged, as the champion owl mimic among his boyhood acquaintances, William Raincock, the brother of his friend John Fleming (*op. cit.*, I: 37). It can be assumed that the technique of owl mimicry was well known among the boys of the Lakes and was a tradition passed on from much earlier than the eighteenth century. In *Birds of the grey wind* (Oxford, University Press, 1940; p. 50) I called attention to Wordsworth's proficiency as owl mimic. The species concerned is the Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*). No other owl species occurring in the British Isles may be called thus. Near Windermere I have verified that the descendants of Wordsworth's owls still respond to "mimic hootings." By a somewhat similar technique a cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) may be called to within a few yards. On Barro Colorado an owl utters a shriek very similar to that of a human being in agony; by imitating this I was able to attract it to a perch a few feet above my head. Among shamanistic people, such as the Siberian tribes, the imitation of bird songs and calls plays a significant part in their ritual. As the owl has ceremonial importance among them (Armstrong, *The folklore of birds*, London, Collins, 1958) and their customs bear traces of preserving palaeolithic ritual it is possible that owl mimicry antedates Wordsworth by 15,000 years or more.—EDWARD A. ARMSTRONG, *St. Mark's Vicarage, Cambridge, England*.