

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D. Amadon of The American Museum of Natural History are writing a monograph on the family Cracidae and would welcome unpublished information.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