

BREWSTER AND COUES AWARDS, 1977

BREWSTER AWARD 1977

RODOLPHE MEYER DE SCHAUENSEE



In the working libraries of those studying the Neotropical avifauna, one book stands out by virtue of its worn covers and well-thumbed pages. This familiar red-bound volume is undoubtedly the single most frequently consulted work on South American birds at the present time—Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee's "The Species of Birds of South America and their Distribution." For those who think of species lists as stark compilations, this book is a revelation. It reflects the author's original taxonomic research on virtually every family of Neotropical birds. The copious footnotes, presenting alternative taxonomic opinions, references to pertinent revisionary or nomenclatural papers, explanations for changes of status, and cross-references to scientific names used in other standard works, add tremendously to the usefulness of the book and make it a mine of information and of suggestions for needed taxonomic and distributional studies. It has already become the accepted authority for English names of South American birds.

Although the book cited above would well merit a Brewster Award by itself, we honor in addition the author's lifetime body of work on Neotropical birds, including two books on Colombian birds, a guide to the birds of South America, and dozens of research papers on systematics and distribution. It is highly appropriate that the Brewster Award for 1977 be conferred upon Rodolphe Meyer de Schauensee.

COUES AWARD 1977

JEAN DELACOUR AND ERNST MAYR



Jean Delacour, 1977



Ernst Mayr, ca. 1955

In seeking a truly "landmark" paper in the history of modern ornithology, one is inevitably led to Delacour and Mayr's classification of the waterfowl, "The family Anatidae" (*Wilson Bulletin* 57: 3–55, 1945). It thoroughly rearranged a long-standing and clearly obsolete classification of one of the most important families of birds. All serious work on waterfowl subsequent to this paper is based upon it or on one of its many descendants. But the influence of this landmark paper far transcends its importance as a revision of a given avian family. It was the first major revision at the family level that endeavored to embody not only the traditional morphological characters of systematics, but also comparative behavior—pair formation, displays, nesting, voice, and feeding habits. Other hitherto unorthodox characters employed by the authors in their assessment of waterfowl relationships included patterns of the downy young, molt, and the proportions and postures of living birds.

This paper has had a profound effect on the literature of the waterfowl and was one of the principal pioneers in the now well-established tradition of broadly-based taxonomic revisions. It represents precisely the kind of turning point in ornithology for which the Coues Award was created.