

away with trivial names in our literature and correspondence at least. This would simplify things immensely. Not only would space be saved in faunal lists but in exchanging specimens one would need be familiar with only one set of names. It is extremely annoying to receive a list of trivial names and have to translate them before knowing what species are offered. Ichthyologist, mammalogist, herpetologist, and invertebrate systematists seem to struggle along without the use of trivial names; why cannot ornithologists? If we had a list of common names which were ordinarily recognized, they would be useful, but such a thing is impossible, and why we should advocate the use of such names as smew, jabiru, limpkin, parauque, grassquit and dickcissel is a fact I do not understand. Scientific are more accurate than, and as readily used when known, as trivial names, in fact, are often preferred. The recognition of both increases, without any accompanying advantage, the labors of memory; common names can never become to any extent so well known as the scientific. These are the reasons for which I advocate abandoning trivial terms.

RICHARD C. MCGREGOR.

Palo Alto, Cal.

1 *Auk* XII, 91.

2 *idem* 194.

3 *J. A. A. Auk* I, 303.

4 *Audubon Mag.* I, 101.

5 *Names and Portraits of Birds.*

6 *Osprey* IV, 12.

7 *F. E. I. Reel, Auk* XII, 192.

Importance of Accuracy in Lists.

Every bird student and collector will read with pleasure such lists as that of Mr. Price on the Birds of the Lower Colorado Valley, and that other lists are to be published from time to time. At the start, however, I wish to give a word of caution against placing in such lists any bird that has not, without a shadow of doubt, been identified either by actual specimens secured or by familiarity with the species. While I do not wish to detract from Mr. Price's observations, a careful perusal of his list shows that nineteen out of ninety-one birds mentioned are either doubtful or simply a guess as to their identity.

In this age of careful and systematic research our lists, which are to be the basis of all future work in that line, should contain only actually identified species. In connection with such a list, a sort of supplementary one should follow, giving all information possible as to birds that were observed but of whose identity there was a doubt. In other words, leaving

for the future observer a chance to follow up such observations and earn for the bird a place in the list proper.

Every observer has to fight constantly against the inclination to identify a bird when he feels in the bottom of his heart that he is not quite sure of it. So he may put it down with more or less elaborate notes which may be confirmed afterward by some observer with more time or better facilities, or it may not. In the one case by a lucky guess he places on the list a name which rightfully belongs there only after identity by another. In case of an unlucky guess he has placed on record something that causes more or less confusion to others for years to come.

So I say put in the lists only such birds as are without question and absolutely identified. The principal value of these lists will be to define the geographical range of species and subspecies and in some cases the lines are so finely drawn that identity in the field, excepting under the most favorable conditions, is almost impossible. In such cases enough specimens should be secured to settle the matter. If this cannot be done then the fact that cormorants, or whatever the bird may happen to be, has been seen should be mentioned in the supplementary list, leaving the identity of the species to whoever may follow, after which it may rightfully belong in the list proper.

FRANK S. DAGGETT.

Pasadena, Cal.



Book Reviews.

NATURAL HISTORY OF THE TRES MARIAS ISLANDS, MEXICO. By E. W. Nelson, North American Fauna No. 14, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, April 29, 1899, pp. 97.

This paper contains all the information which the Department of Agriculture has secured through the work of Mr. Nelson of the Biological Survey, who thoroughly explored the Tres Marias group in May, 1897, making collections of birds and mammals and securing also specimens of reptiles, fishes, mollusks, crustaceans and plants, on all of which complete reports have been given in the present work. The general description, birds, mammals and a partial bibliography of the islands are by Mr. Nelson.

From the introduction it appears that the islands have been known since 1532 but no scientific work was accomplished there until 1865 when Col. A. J. Grayson visited the group. The four islands are 65 miles from San Blas, and the highest of the group, Maria Madre, reaches an elevation of 2,000 feet. The islands are mountainous and fresh water is scarce in summer. Mr. Nelson records 83 species and subspecies of birds from the group.