

Scarce in occasional dry winters. Usually some arrivals about October 15, but bulk of arrivals varying with seasons.

136 *Hesperocichla naevia*. VARIED THRUSH. Abundant winter resident. Bulk of arrivals early in November. Leaves in April.

137 *Sialia m. occidentalis*. WESTERN BLUEBIRD. Abundant resident.

*"Summer Resident"—breeds.



Communications.

Concerning the Active Membership of the A. O. U.

Editor THE CONDOR:

The question has often been asked since I came to California why so few of our workers are included in the "active" list of the A. O. U. Following up this idea one is at once impressed with the fact that among our western ornithologists there is a strong feeling that we, as a whole, should be better and more fairly represented in that body.

When the A. O. U. was founded, I believe in 1883, there was comparatively little interest in ornithology and that mainly confined to the scientific centers of the East, so it was very natural that its membership at that time should be made up from that section. Certainly the timber selected at that time was so sound that the ornithologists of the country have accepted that body as their authority ever since, and no doubt will continue to do so for all time provided it broadens and expands to meet the changed conditions which confront it from year to year. Up to the present time the A. O. U. has maintained a policy of seclusion by adhering arbitrarily to a rule that limits its active list to fifty members, to the exclusion of many worthy workers, and I find a strong sentiment exists that this policy be changed. Right here it might be well to mention some of the many reasons given why the West, (and by that I mean all that section of the country not under the direct inspection of the Eastern scientific centers) should be more fully recognized in that body. The one most often put forward is the fact that interest, instead of being confined to a little coterie in the East, has spread all over the country until every state has its workers; not mere dabblers and "bird skimmers," but active, intelligent workers who are covering their respective fields with credit.

Take California for instance with its Cooper Ornithological Club containing a membership of 90, supporting an organ "The Condor," which has almost a monopoly of original articles covering western field notes and discoveries. Other states are forging to the front and today instead of depending upon occasional expeditions and trips to these far-away points, which at best could make but a cursory examination, we have active workers

on the ground the year around; in fact, now that the East has been so thoroughly gleaned and threshed, it is to these remote parts and to these same workers that the East must look for detailed facts concerning our least known birds. It certainly is an important event when an expedition returns with a new species to describe, but it is also important to learn the life history of that species and that is what our western workers are doing today, and the facts regarding migration, distribution and habits of western birds are as important to the world as were those which gave reputation to the founders of the A. O. U.

Another reason often mentioned why the A. O. U. should enlarge its active list, or take such action as will infuse new blood into its veins as a specific against old age, is the fact that many of its members have completed their life work or, in other words, while they retain interest in ornithology, they have ceased to be "active" in the full sense of the word. One cannot say that they are entirely shelved for their names are still to conjure by, but their life work is behind them and in numbers are out of all proportion to an active list limited to 50. I doubt if there are really 30 active members in the A. O. U. Each year this fact becomes more apparent, and it is only a question of time when the Union will be dominated by a handful of men, if it has not already reached that point. So there is reason for the demand that instead of contracting while all else is expanding, it should meet the conditions which prevail and give all sections representation that represents.

It has not been made plain how the A. O. U. had best meet the question, but the simplest way would be to increase the number to 60 or 75, or it might provide for the advancement of an "active" member after he had completed his life work to an "honorary" list, filling the vacancy in the active list from the best material at hand; but this is only a matter of detail. What I wish to emphasize is the fact that there is an organization in the U. S. supported by the leading ornithologists, its "active" membership composed of men who have been, and many are now, our most active ornithologists, becoming each year more inactive by the shelving on account of ill health, or otherwise, of its older members; maintaining a policy which prevents an ornithologist of equal calibre from taking the place he is entitled to in the council of the elect.

I would be utterly opposed to a change if it were to result in admitting a single incompetent person to the "active" list. The requirements should be severe and the honor only come to those who earn it; but there are a few who deserve it and should not be deprived of the honor because the number fifty is arbitrarily adhered to. Out of our membership of 90 I am sure we have two, possibly three, who would fill the requirement in every way. You will see by this number that I fix the standard high, and I would not expect that all would be admitted at once, but certainly one or two should be.

I have never heard of any good reason why this state of affairs should exist, perhaps it can be explained. Certainly there are many who would like to have the condition changed or else satisfactorily explained.

FRANK S. DAGGETT,

Pasadena, Cal.



The Club Collection of Birds.

Denver, Colo., March 21, 1900.

To The Cooper Ornithological Club:

Apropos of the suggestion of President Emerson that you aggregate a study collection of 5000 skins, and on the assurance that the collection is well under way, I will contribute 100 from this state, a representative lot, and give the club some choice as far as practicable in their selection. I should like to be informed of your plans for the keeping and handling of the collection etc.

Very truly,

FRED M. DILLE.



Publications Reviewed.

WARBLER SONGS. The Wilson Bulletin, No. 30. By Lynds Jones, Oberlin, O. Jan. 1900. pp 56.

Not since the publication of its valuable bulletin on the American Crow, under the direction of Mr. Frank Burns, has the Wilson Ornithological Chapter put forth such a complete summary of results in a given line of study as that embodied in the present *Bulletin*. From a field of study possessing an almost limitless range of results, Mr. Jones has gleaned enough substantial facts, and has so arranged his observations, as to form a most creditable basis from which to proceed farther in the work of warbler songs. This has been no easy task, especially the separation of the various warblers into the class whose song is most nearly like their own.

Two song periods are first defined,—the *diurnal* and the *seasonal*, and these in turn are subdivided into the "call song" and "passion song," between which the author distinguishes as follows: "The call song is the product of a deliberate purpose but the passion song wants no purpose. It bursts forth unbidden." Mr. Jones comments upon the difficulties of properly describing bird songs, and with him the majority of our observers will agree. He says: "This may be minimized by combining notes from many describers, thus securing a sort of Volapuk description, which will really be a generalized song possibly suggestive to most persons already familiar with the song, but practically useless to the novice."

Following a lucid introduction comes the descriptions of the warbler songs, divided into five classes. These are: 1. Thin, wiry high-pitched songs; 2. Songs of striking character; 3. Songs resembling that of the Chipping Sparrow and Junco; 4. Species whose songs resemble that of the Yellow Warbler; 5. Whistling songs. Under each heading appears the proper species and subspecies, together with numerous examples of their songs. It is obvious, however, that the songs of a genus are sometimes widely divergent in its several species; for illustration, species of the *Dendroica* group are found in each of the five categories. The paper ends with "A Field Key to the Spring Males." Throughout the work the author has embraced the observations of all recent writers on the subject, and the paper forms the neatest thing on warbler songs which has been given us.—C. B.



THE U. S. Coast & Geodetic Survey steamer *Pathfinder*, which has been engaged in chart work about the Hawaiian Islands, has reached Seattle, whence she will leave shortly for Alaskan waters. Mr. Richard C. McGregor is acting as official photographer to the expedition.