

labeled facts to the sum of knowledge as well as the astronomer with his new telescopes discover new stars and the histologist with his new methods of preservation find unexpected conditions?

A name is called a handle to a fact; and it might be argued that if the handle becomes too slippery to grasp it loses its usefulness. There is another side to this however, for even a slippery handle may be held firmly by a strong or practiced hand, and if the facts be worth grasping, is it not more profitable to have trained hands for slippery handles than to have no handles and lose sight of significant facts?

"The importance of determining with the utmost exactness the geographical variations of birds in further elucidating the laws of evolution by environment" certainly cannot be overestimated. Practically all that is known of this subject has been accomplished by careful systematists, splitters possibly, who with large series of specimens have conscientiously worked out problems which in many cases could not possibly be appreciated by equally acute workers having few specimens from limited localities. Would it then advance knowledge of this subject to promulgate a doctrine that characters not convincing in a single specimen should be disregarded. A few mistakes now and then may not be more harmful than otherwise, for in rectifying them a better appreciation of the facts is always gained and new lines of investigation are often started. From the beginning of systematic zoological work mistakes have been made, but if this were to deter workers from entering the field, progress would be exceedingly slow. The mistakes which were made in the days of 'lumping' were certainly more egregious than any the 'splitters' have made, and it can hardly be gainsaid that of the two extremes, splitting is the one which tends to the most careful work and the keenest appreciation of nature's facts. If the great army of amateur ornithologists cannot keep pace with the technical systematists there is still nothing in the nature of the case which will interfere with the very important studies which they are making of the life histories of our birds. In publishing the results of his work the ornithologist who does not have access to large collections may choose to subordinate subspecific names by printing them in small type or referring to them collectively under each species and still the value of his contributions to distribution or life history is not necessarily impaired. If it is impossible to draw a mean between 'splitters' and 'lumpers', there ought to be room for each to work in his own sphere.

The foregoing remarks are made in no controversial spirit whatever, but entirely in the hope that they may elicit further discussion of questions which must be of considerable concern to all who are interested or working in systematic zoology.

WILFRED H. OSGOOD.

Washington, D. C. Feb. 18, 1901.

ANENT POSSESSIVE BIRD NAMES.

*"Be not the first by whom the new is tried,
Nor yet the last to cast the old aside."*

EDITORS OF THE CONDOR:—You will perhaps permit me once more, through the medium of your paper, to open the question of the use of common bird names. The question which I raise this time is not of common names *vs.* scientific names, but has to do with the changes which have been rung on some of our trivial names.

The most radical change is that adopted by the Biological Survey and first used by them in North American Fauna No. 16. This is the dropping of the "s" in such names as Townsend's Warbler making Townsend Warbler. This at first sight looks peculiar and in such names as Gray Tanager and Brown Song Sparrow one might be led to suspect these birds of being respectively gray and brown, but this is not a serious objection.

The points in favor of the change are stated in a letter from Dr. Merriam, dated December 22, of which the following is a part:

"I would state that my practice of dropping the "s" in the common names of species derived from the names of persons is based on two things: (1) The fact that the species are not in any way the property of the persons whose names they bear, but are merely named in honor of these persons; (2) The modern tendency in similar cases in other departments of science. You are aware of course that the National Board on Geographical Names has for many years abandoned the use of possessives in all geographical names, as Lassen Butte, not Lassen's Butte, Hudson Bay, not Hudson's Bay, and so on. Similarly the Forestry people in their catalogue and checklist of forest trees of the United States have dropped the possessive, using Parry pinion, not Parry's pinion, Jeffrey pine, not Jeffrey's pine, Coulter pine, not Coulter's pine, Englemann spruce, not Englemann's spruce, and so on to the end of the list. Among botanists the same tendency is notable, and it occurred to me that there was no particular reason why we should stand at the tail of the procession."

It might be added in favor of the simpler form of name that there is a slight saving of time and space. Hudson Bay is shorter and simpler than Hudson's Bay and just as specific. The same is true of all personal names either botanical or zoological. I trust, Mr. Editors that you will find it desirable to adopt this idea for THE CONDOR.

Personally I take little interest in the matter, common names being altogether unreliable, but as there is considerable difference of opinion among our members, it seems well to bring the subject before the Club as a whole. There is also some variation in names of

birds named for states. Thus a glance through the checklist shows thirteen species referred substantively to California, while five are modified by Californian. Similarly we find Canada Jay and Canadian Warbler. These names are inconsistent somewhere and one form of name should be used throughout. Certainly either Canada Grouse or Canadian Ruffed Grouse should be changed.

Just one more point and I will close. In spite of our checklist, which is supposed to regulate the use of names, there is a growing disregard of the A. O. U. trivial names. In some cases older names are used and in others new names are coined. Sierra Junco for Thurber's Junco, Valley Quail for Valley Partridge, Turkey Buzzard for Turkey Vulture are examples from recent publications. I cannot do better than to quote a paragraph from Dr. Merriam's letter as clearly stating my own feeling in the matter:

"Your inquiry with respect to the A. O. U. tendency in common names gives me an opportunity to state that I place no weight whatever on the fact of the adoption or rejection of a particular name, or form of name, among the common names of birds as used in the A. O. U. checklist. In other words, my position is and has always been that the A. O. U. ruling on points of scientific nomenclature should carry great weight, but that in matters of common English names of species every man is at liberty to use whatever name he pleases. Whatever one's views may be on this matter, the fact remains that so large a number of writers do use common names different from those in the Code that it is absolutely necessary in many cases to give the scientific name if the record is of any value."

Respectfully,

RICHARD C. MCGREGOR.

San Francisco, Feb. 7, 1901.

PARASITES IN BIRDS.

EDITOR THE CONDOR:—In Vol. II, page 91 of THE CONDOR I note a communication regarding tapeworms in young mountain quail, and in Vol. III, page 15 a communication on further tapeworm observations. Let me say that these observations are not unique; so far as statistics are to hand quail are moderately frequently infected in various parts of the world. The most accurate statistics at hand, in a recent paper on the parasites of birds in the Rhine provinces, Germany and Switzerland shows that out of six hundred thirty (630) birds examined only one hundred eighty (180) or 28 per cent were free from parasites, while 231 or 35 per cent harbored tapeworms in varying numbers. Other authorities state that

in Europe the true partridges are infected in six out of seven cases, or in eight out of eleven cases. The same is true of allied species. It may positively be said that these species are not dangerous to man further than that, if present in sufficient numbers, they are detrimental to the general health of the bird. In various parts of France and Germany, tapeworm epidemics among game birds have frequently been noted. I have, however, a somewhat extensive summary of the results of these studies which will appear in the present number of the Proceedings of the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union. To this will be added the records of collections made here from various kinds of birds and by many observers.

I will be glad to identify species for your correspondents, if they will send me specimens. It is not always possible to give an accurate identification from a single specimen where the species is imperfectly known, and it is necessary that the tapeworm should have both head and ripe segments. Specimens may be sent in alcohol preferably after preservation in corrosive sublimate mixture, or in 5 per cent solution of formal into which the parasites may be put immediately after removal from the host. The accumulation of data regarding these forms is of great scientific and economic importance. I shall gladly avail myself of all the help which your correspondents may be able to give.

Very truly yours,

HENRY B. WARD.

University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebr.



Publications Reviewed

LAWS REGULATING THE TRANSPORTATION AND SALE OF GAME. By T. S. Palmer and H. W. Olds. Bulletin No. 14, Biological Survey pp. 88 and table of closed seasons.

This publication is by far the most complete and practical compendium of game laws yet given the public, covering as it does all the statutes now in effect, including federal, state, or in many instances county laws. Full information concerning market hunting, shipment of game, transportation of live game for propagation, close seasons and numerous other points of importance are dealt with at length, accompanied by numerous tables and maps in detail. It is impossible to review at length such a valuable addition to our knowledge of the game laws, and we advise the reader to procure a copy of this publication and to keep it where it may be consulted freely. By this means will each individual appreciate the vast amount of compilation necessary to produce such a complete digest as well as the amount of solid information it contains.—C. B.