

THE CONDOR.

Bulletin of the

COOPER ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB OF CALIFORNIA.

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EDITORIAL

Our contemporary, *The Osprey*, begins the new year with a new series. The January issue presents a change of cover paper while laid paper is used of the inside, giving a pleasing result. An excellent monograph of the California jay by Donald A. Cohen constitutes the opening article.

The editors present their thanks to Mr. Richard C. McGregor for his careful preparation of the index to Volume III which is mailed with this issue.

Readers of this magazine will observe that almost the entire space of the issue is given over to text. The problem of a large quantity of MS. has necessitated the omission of a number of half-tones intended for this issue, but these will appear in the May CONDOR. Among the illustrated articles laid over is one by Wm. L. Finley on "Seabirds of the Oregon Coast", accompanied by several of Mr. Bohlman's superb bird photographs.

CORRESPONDENCE.

A LETTER FROM THE GALAPAGOS EX- PEDITION.

Lat. 16° 40', Long 104° 15'.
January 1, 1902.

Editor THE CONDOR:

A resolution formed this morning (the customary day for new resolutions) was to the effect

that a nice, rambling, disconnected letter to you would be the proper form. (Digression: Have just spent one-half hour getting a small tern, a new one to us, that flew about in company of another, the former being the first of its kind we have seen). To begin, the weather is a fertile topic, we having had lovely weather for steamboats but for our sailing vessel a trifle too calm.

We are 240 miles west of Acapulco, Mexico, where we are bound with two men from Clipperton Island. Yesterday we made 16 miles N. W., the day before 9 miles N. E., and the two preceding days 100 miles each east, so you see it is about as uncertain as it is collecting eagles' eggs at Sargents. We thought four days ago that we might be at Acapulco by New Years; now we hope to get there in the sweet bye and bye. From there we go to Cocos, probably, and thence to the Galapagos. After leaving Mexico we expect a fair wind to Cocos.

The evenings and mornings are glorious out here, bright, delicately-tinted clouds at sunset and daybreak that completely eclipse similar sea-scapes in California. The birds that occur off here are several in variety. The other morning, my watch from 4 to 8, the first seen was a single shearwater from Socorro, then a petrel flitted by. Next was a young Brewster booby that circled about and flew off to join some blue-faced boobies in the distance. A red-billed tropic bird appeared for a few minutes and later in the day a frigate bird showed in the sky. These are our usual visitors.

Around Clipperton *Aestrelata phaeopygia* was frequently seen and the sooty terns wander hundred of miles from the island. The blue-faced boobies found at sea at this season are all young birds, that is, ten or eleven months old. Nearly all that we have seen at sea for the last three weeks have been in this plumage. Within 40 miles of Clipperton adult boobies were common, and of the thousands of blue-faced boobies seen on the island but one was seen in the spotted plumage.

Clipperton Island! How I'd like to spend the month of January there with a good 8x10 camera. The family life of three or four species of birds could be pretty well photographed in that time. Of the blue-faced boobies (*Sula cyanops*) one can get a picture of one or a hundred or a thousand. Their tameness is occasionally decidedly annoying when one happens to be in a hurry and the nests are close together. It is advisable always to walk not closer than two feet from a sitting bird. With nests scattered around promiscuously it is a regular zigzag trail one makes. *Sula nesiototes* which is abundant also, does not nest till later though pairs of birds are holding down nesting sites and an occasional young bird unable to fly is noted.

But the land crabs! Why, there are millions

and millions of them and the astonishing effrontery of the intrepid thieves! I couldn't stand still two minutes before one would be clawing at my shoe, and from all directions the crabs would be edging toward me with a stealthy, sidelong, intermittent movement, and great, wide-open, bulging, staring eyes. As an instance of their amazing impudence I laid down three or four birds in front of me in order to wrap up some eggs. After wrapping three or four I glanced at the birds and an insatiable glutton of a crab had chewed off an eyelid of one while two others were picking at the wings of another bird and yards away other crabs were hurrying forward to participate in the toothsome repast. I scared back the nearest and felt a nip at my foot. There was an old reprobate trying to crawl into a little crack in my shoe, while near at hand came others to reinforce him. I actually had to wrap the birds up before doing anything else.

Now if I wanted to give you a distorted version or exaggerate this statement in the least I would elaborate in the manner in which they carried off eggs while I was wrapping birds, but I haven't given you any thing but an abridged condensation of the facts! I wrapped the birds and eggs in a hurry and left the spot. But it is laughable to see a crab seize an egg as they do with boobies' eggs when occasion offers. They grasp it tenderly in that long arm and sidle off in a fashion highly amusing. The men on the islands tell me the crabs often take the young boobies from under their parents and I can easily believe it. They also say but one young bird is reared though two eggs are usually hatched. I cannot recall now having seen two fair-sized young of either the blue-faced or variegated species, though I have seen plenty of nests of both with one young bird and two eggs.

The land crabs are one of the unpleasant features to a collector down here. On Socorro Island which we visited I wandered along under a wide-spreading mangrove-like tree and would see an inviting looking dead stump with an excellent roosting hole for a pair of the rare screech owls. Running my arm down to the full length I would jerk it out with a great big orange and pink land crab closely hugging a sore finger that had inadvertently been placed in his light. A careful inspection of other similar holes usually revealed one of the detestable cannibals snugly ensconced therein. While larger than Clipperton crabs they are not as plentiful and one could lay down 15 or 20 minutes I think before a crab would venture near. They are more cautious on this island, due perhaps to the redtails which I think eat them. On San Benedicte and Clarion islands one is unaware of the existence of crabs till he has dug five or six feet down with his hands into a fresh looking shear-

water's nest. Then stretched out in the boiling sun, covered with dirt and perspiration and straining every muscle to reach the end of the hole, you feel a decided pressure on the tips of two or three fingers and after a long, strong pull out comes a fine red land crab in the place of the shearwater you hoped for. But enough of these ever-present pests.

On San Benedicte I got into a colony of frigate birds that were nesting on the ground. At a mile distant a number were seen circling about a knoll and I went over to see what was the attraction. Webster boobies were nesting in the long grass in the little runs and hollows, this being the first time I had seen them nesting on the ground. On Clarion and in the Galapagos they always nested in trees and bushes, while here there were no trees. Approaching the ridge 200 or more frigates were seen sitting closely together. I took off my hat and crouching low, worked my way carefully along to a favorable position for a photograph but it was facing the bright sun so I determined to get around to the other end of the colony. Circling a little mound I came plump into a lot of nests with young birds two weeks old, and up the hill seventy-five yards were 500 or more setting birds.

I sneaked across and into a deep gully that ran parallel with the ridges on which they were nesting. Getting near the upper end of the colony I cautiously raised my head and planted the camera at a distance of twenty yards and got a picture. Then I slowly crept forward to fifteen yards and gradually closer and as the birds were not seriously disturbed I walked right up to the nearest one but they stayed where they were. For the next hour I maneuvered through that mass of birds trying the camera first in one position and then in another. Finally I placed the tripod squarely over a setting bird and got a snap. Then I decided to get a picture showing the eggs in the nests. I placed the camera and started out to scare off 20 or 30 birds in front of it, and it was necessary to elevate the birds with my foot to persuade them to leave. I was only able to use three plates in this colony having taken but six ashore. It was the most compact colony of nesting frigates I have seen. And the flying lice! Some birds would have two or three dozen in the nest. When left suddenly by the bird they fluttered into my face, hands and head and the tenacity of their grip was bewildering. Sometimes there were a dozen on the throat of a setting booby, something I never noticed elsewhere.

Leisurely yours,

R. H. BECK.

Five miles off Acapulco.

JANUARY, 5, 1902.

We are now sailing wing and wing for the entrance of the harbor and will be ashore to-

morrow if nothing happens. Yesterday I had the boat out and picked up a least petrel and a couple of others. Three or four Brewster boobies which were common are also laid away for inspection. We saw several turtles but they heard us approaching and went down before we could get near. Adieu till next summer,—June or July perhaps.

R. H. BECK

Official Minutes Northern Division.

MARCH.

The Division met at Palo Alto March 8, President Grinnell presiding and fourteen active members present. Five visitors were present. The following were elected to active membership in the Club; Dr. R. F. Rooney, Auburn; Leverett M. Loomis, San Francisco; Murray M. Watson, Pacific Grove and Frank J. Smith, Eureka.

Eight proposals for membership were filed, as follows:—Frederick W. Kobbe, San Francisco; Geo. H. Ready, Santa Cruz; Lee Nims, Pacific Grove; Hubert O. Jenkins, Stanford University; Alice M. Jenkins, Stanford University; Wm. G. Renwick, Claremont; Clarence S. Sharp, Escondido; Wilson C. Hanna, Colton.

The resignations of Henry C Johnson, Harry B. Torrey and E. B. Towne were read and accepted. The programme of the evening was then taken up. Fred H. Fowler spoke on "Reminiscences of Arizona Birds," dealing with field work in the Huachuca Mts., with Dr. A. K. Fisher some years ago. Many anecdotes served to make the talk peculiarly interesting. Mr. H. W. Fowler of Philadelphia read a paper entitled "Ornithology of Philadelphia", covering the progress of ornithology in that city and referring to its present active workers. Ralph Arnold detailed the "Nesting of the Dwarf Hermit Thrush" in the Cascade Mts. of Washington, and Joseph Grinnell spoke on "The Parasitic Gulls of the Pacific Coast", exhibiting skins and various plumages of the jaegers of the coast and interestingly outlining their piratical tendencies.

The Club meets next on May 3 at Berkeley.

Official Minutes Southern Division.

JANUARY.

The annual meeting of the Southern Division was held Jan. 11 at the studio of Mr. Roth Reynolds, H. J. Leland presiding and eight members present. Dr. F. M. Palmer was elected to active membership. The resignation of W. Scott Way of Cucamonga was accepted. The report of the Division treasurer for the past year was given by Mr. Swarth and accepted. The annual election of officers resulted as follows, to serve during 1902: President, F. S. Daggett; vice president, H. J. Leland; secretary, Howard Robertson; treasurer, H. S. Swarth; associate editor, Howard Robert-

son. On suggestion of Mr. Leland it was decided to adopt a systematic plan of study, taking up some one of the bird families at each meeting. The following papers were read: "Over the Teslin Trail to Dawson," W. B. Judson; "Bird Studies from a Hammock in Strawberry Valley" Mrs. C. A. Moody; "The Snowy Plover and Passing of the Great Blue Heron," W. L. Chambers.

FEBRUARY.

The Division met Feb. 7 at the residence of W. B. Judson with eight members present. Mrs. Bowers was present as a visitor. The resignation of Howard Rivers was accepted. The resignation of Dr. Garrett Newkirk was withdrawn. H. L. Graham of Redlands was reinstated to active membership. Several short articles on the hummingbirds were presented, as follows: "The Hummingbirds of Escondido and Vicinity," Nelson Carpenter; "A Few Notes on the Nesting of *T. alexandri*", R. C. Wueste; "From My Note Book", Mollie Bryan; "Annâ Hummingbird", Burnell Franklin Mr. Swarth read some extracts from notes taken by Mr. F. Stephens on a trip from Yuma through San Bernardino to Bear Valley some years ago. He also exhibited a number of skins of hummingbirds found in the United States and about sixty varieties from South America, giving a short sketch of nearly all. Mr Simmons exhibited a number of nests and eggs of hummingbirds common in Southern California.

FEBRUARY

The Division met Feb. 28 with Mr. Roth Reynolds with thirteen active members and four visitors present. The names of Thomas Brown and Edward Howard of Los Angeles were proposed for active membership. The following papers were read. "Some Owl Notes from my Note Book", F. Stephens; "Notes", J. Eugene Law; "Owls of Escondido and Vicinity", Nelson Carpenter; "The Pygmy Owl", W. B. Judson. Mr. Reynolds read an article in answer to an argument presented by Mr. Swarth at a recent meeting concerning "the use of facts". The Division meets next on March 28 when the hawks will be discussed.

OBITUARY.

In the middle of January last, Miss Bertha F. Herrick of Oakland, an active member of the Cooper Ornithological Club, passed away. Miss Herrick had always possessed a deep love for Nature, and her rambles afield led her most often among the birds. Seven years ago she took out field classes of children from Oakland, whom she found pleasure in instructing in the varied and beautiful secrets of the field and forest, and those who knew her thus hold her in loving memory. Miss Herrick had been a member of the Club for two years and had at all times enthusiastically assisted in its work.