

THE CONDOR

An Illustrated Magazine
of Western Ornithology

Published Bi-Monthly by the Cooper Ornithological Club of California.

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Pasadena, California: Published June 15, 1907

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

One Dollar and Fifty Cents per Year in the United States, Mexico, and U. S. Colonies, payable in advance.

Thirty Cents the single copy.

One Dollar and Seventy-five Cents per Year in all other countries in the International Postal Union.

Claims for missing or imperfect numbers should be made within thirty days of date of issue.

Subscriptions should be sent to the Business Manager.

Manuscripts and Exchanges should be sent to the Editor.

Advertising Rates on application.

EDITORIALS

In the vote to establish certain usages in our magazine, twenty-three Cooper Club members responded, with the following results:

By a vote of 18 to 5 we are *not* to use the metric system *exclusively* in THE CONDOR. We will use whichever system authors of articles prefer. A wise suggestion is that in technical accounts, the metric system be employed, but English equivalents given in parenthesis. No one would then be inconvenienced.

By a vote of 16 to 7 we are to continue to use the simplified spelling in its authoritatively recommended moderation.

By a vote of 12 to 11 we are hereafter to begin with capitals all vernacular names of birds in the body of sentences, as well as in lists. This is the only change from our previous custom. Mr. Dawson's presentation of this subject in our last issue, leaves us convinced of the correctness of his views, and we are now glad the vote decided the matter in that way.

We want to make THE CONDOR an attractive magazine in general typographical make-up, as well as from a scientific and popular standpoint, and to that end we will welcome relevant suggestions from anyone.

The present editor is sorry he cannot see his way to adding a juvenile or school department to this magazine as has been urged from several directions on this coast. We really do not see the expediency of such a move. *Bird-Lore* is filling the educational field admirably; why should we compete with it? And, too, we do not believe it would meet the approval of

anywhere near a majority of Cooper Club members.

It has been our conviction that we should conduct a medium for the publication of serious ornithology, not necessarily technical, however. We believe nothing at all should be published anywhere, that is so obscurely couched as to be incomprehensible to the average reader. The most important fact and profound philosophy *should* be stated "popularly," in the sense of being clearly worded, with an elimination of unusual terms.

On the other hand we abhor that style of article in which one must search for the germ of information within a frothy mass of inconsequential chatter, as is the characteristic of so much of our "Nature" literature nowadays. We do not believe our mission to be to furnish "light reading" for people who are not interested enough to care for real bird-study.

The Washington Audubon Society was organized at Seattle, the 20th of April, with W. Leon Dawson as President, and H. Rief as Secretary.

Contrary to our contention in our last November issue that the "House Finch" is universally called "Linnet," Mr. E. R. Warren tells us that in Colorado 99 out of every 100 persons familiar with "House Finches" never heard of "Linnets"! However, we feel quite sure that the latter name prevails over the largest part of the bird's range.

Walter P. Taylor is spending the summer in natural history field-work along the Colorado River near Searchlight.

COMMUNICATIONS

BAIRD'S OR BAIRD?

Editors of THE CONDOR:

It will be small compliment to the reader, I fear, if I confess in advance that I have not freshly reviewed the discussion upon the mooted point of the possessive or adjectival form of bird names. But perhaps I shall succeed in stating the case freshly, if for no other reason than that no account has been taken of the excellent matter already published.

The trouble is that contention has been made for the use of pronominal adjective *or* possessive, whereas, in truth, both have proper uses. And this failure to grasp the validity of both forms is due chiefly to a failure in distinguishing between a bird as an individual and a bird as a species or a member of a species.

Take for example *Centronyx bairdii* (Aud.), called since its dedication in 1843 Baird's Sparrow. Now the contention is made that Spencer F. Baird—quite apart from the fact that he is dead—had no possessive right in certain sparrows flocking and summering in Dakota, and that, therefore, it is incorrect to speak of

Baird's Sparrow. Regarding these birds as individuals, he had not; but regarded collectively as a species, he had a clear right. The proprietor of the bird as a species was Audubon. He discovered certain sparrows and formed therefrom the concept of a new species, which he presented to the world. It is his as truly as a certain invention is Edison's or a certain proposition in geometry is Euclid's. Audubon delegated, or dedicated, this proprietary right to the species as a scientific concept, to Baird. Henceforth it became the species whose publication was indissolubly connected with the name and honor of Spencer F. Baird. It, *the species*, became *Baird's Sparrow*, in much the same sense that our national capitol is Washington's city.

Baird's Sparrow as a species enjoys such and such a distribution. *Baird's Sparrow occurs in Dakota*—that is to say, the species named in honor of Baird is exemplified in that state. I have no thought of any individual or set of individuals when I make that statement. I violate no principles of grammar, nor do I shock any sense of propriety. It is a correct use.

When we come to the individual we must drop the possessive form. The sparrows as creatures of flesh and feathers belong to all of us (that is to say, the State) and a given example would become Mr. Grinnell's if he got his gun up first. It is as absurd to speak of a Baird's Sparrow as it would be to call a man who hailed from the national capitol a Washington's man. The sparrow is a Baird Sparrow. If he sits on a mullein stalk he is *the* Baird Sparrow who sits on a mullein stalk.

By every analogy, also, it is proper to employ the pronominal form in speaking of the species. The Baird Sparrow is found in meadows. The Washington man is interested in politics—that is, the type, the species, is so interested.

Take an example from a different class to show the interchangeability of terms: The telephone is Edison's invention. This (invention) is Edison's telephone. Here the concept or generic idea is prominent. The Edison Telephone is a great invention—the concept idea is still uppermost; but the pronominal form is perfectly suitable. Now turn to an individual instrument: "This is an Edison telephone", but never "This is an Edison's telephone."

To conclude: In vernacular names of birds either the possessive or pronominal form is correct when the name refers to the bird as a species, or when the conceptual idea is prominent. Only the pronominal form is allowable when the name refers to an individual, or where the idea of individuality is prominent.

Do not these conclusions commend themselves to readers of THE CONDOR? And may

we not have an end of this see-sawing between East and West by recognizing that *both* are right when properly discriminated?

Respectfully yours,

W. LEON DAWSON.

Seattle, April 11, 1907.

NESTING WAYS

Editor THE CONDOR:

Let me, thru your columns, thank most heartily the four or five observers that have given me such royal help in the matter of nesting data. Perhaps other generous-hearted members of the Cooper Club will be on the look-out, during the coming season, for data covering the following (and the following only): Mendocino Song Sparrow, Salt Marsh Yellow-throat, N. W. Bewick Wren, Barlow Chickadee, Big Tree Thrush, Pac. Night Hawk, North. Spotted Owl, N. W. Saw-whet Owl, Gray Jay, Vera Cruz Red-wing, Large-billed Sparrow, and Cal. Sage Sparrow.

Kind words continue to come in, concerning "Nesting Ways", from perfect strangers. The spirit shown by such persons makes one deeply desirous of making the work as comprehensive and as complete as present knowledge can possibly make it. Since I shall always feel that THE CONDOR has been a strong element in making this manual complete and potentially successful I venture, thru its columns, to give the interested bird public a fore-taste of some of the pictorial promise afforded in the pages of "Nesting Ways":

Nesting Sites of Hooded Merganser, Yellow Rail, Wilson Phalarope, Long-billed Curlew, Belted Piping Plover, Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse, Sage Grouse, Turkey Vulture, Prairie Falcon, Saw-whet Owl, Western Horned Owl (in the rocks), Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker, Wright Flycatcher, Canada Jay, Bendire Cross-bill, Leconte Sparrow, Arctic Towhee, Plumbeous Vireo, Alma Thrush, and many of the commoner birds. Of rare or curious nesting conditions portrayed, examples are listed: A three-foot-long nest of the Say Phoebe; beautiful nest-sites of the White-winged Junco, showing the fourth and fifth nests known to science; site and nest of the only known instance of the breeding of the Lincoln Sparrow in Minnesota; a most beautiful suite illustrating the nesting habits of the Rock Wren; photograph showing an undescribed nesting habit of the Sage Thrasher; and a most interesting series of half-tones illustrating a hitherto unknown nesting location of the Rocky Mountain Nuthatch. One of these exhibits the portraits of both of a pair of birds, the male being in the act of coaxing his mate to enter the nest, at a point but four feet from the photographer.

P. B. PHABODY.

Blue Rapids, Kansas; Feb. 11, 1907.