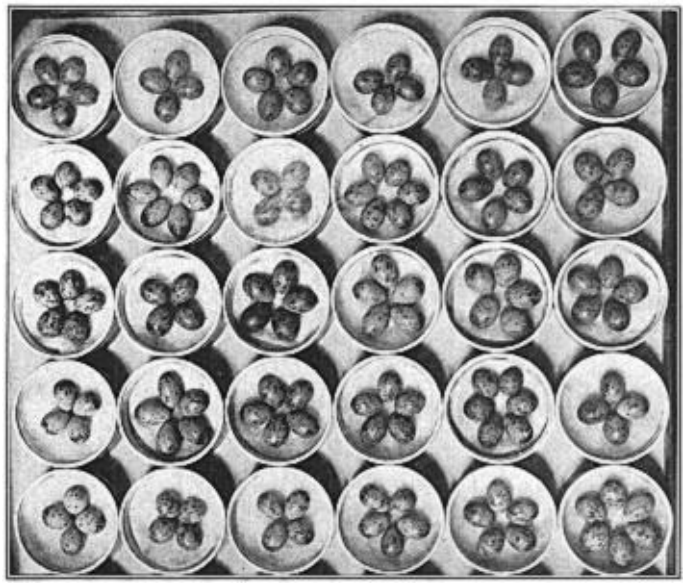
# ARRANGEMENT OF AN OOLOGICAL COLLECTION

BY HERBERT MASSEY, M. B. O. U.

WITH TWO PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

I HAVE read with interest "Some Hints on the Preparation of an Oological Collection," by Robert B. Rockwell in your issue of March-April, 1908, and think that a word or two as to how collections are arranged in this country may be of interest to your readers.

I am not going to enter into a controversy regarding the merits or demerits of "Egg Collecting," but I will say this (and it is a view that is so often overlooked), that the egg-collector does far less harm than the skin-collector: for if a first set is taken the birds will assuredly lay again, but if the birds are shot there is the end. A collector who has a long series of any particular species (and you must have very



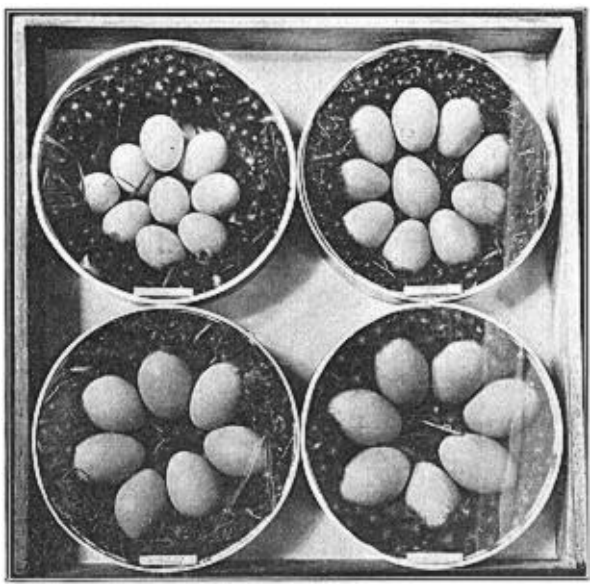
SERIES OF EGGS OF THE TREE PIPIT (ANTHUS ARBOREUS), SHOWING ARRANGEMENT IN GLASS-TOPPED TRAYS

long series of many species), is classed as an egg-hog; but a collector who goes out and sends home some thousand skins to his museum is thought to be a very fine fellow indeed. A series or collection of eggs, well arranged and set out is much more a thing of beauty than a drawer full of rolled up skins; and a private collection or a museum should be pleasing to the eye as well as instructive, and give pleasure to the ordinary lover of nature, as well as to the student.

As regards the housing of a collection it is difficult to speak, as most people have different ideas of cabinets, size of drawers, etc., etc. My cabinets are made of oak, and the drawers of the very best white deal (for lightness), stained fronts, with runners of hard wood. The eggs are arranged systematically based on Howard Saunders' list, with a few exceptions; this way sometimes leads to loss of space where the eggs of birds in the same family vary greatly in size, but this is a small loss compared to the gain in having a systematic arrangement.

Where the eggs are singles as in the Guillemots, Puffins, Razorbills, etc., etc., I have glass frames to the drawers, easily fitted and easily lifted; the eggs rest on sheets of cotton wool, in rows with thin divisions of wood separating the rows; in all the other cases each clutch is in a box to itself, glass topped and nearly air-tight, certainly dust proof; the drawers measure 16¼ inches by 16¼, so that I can get in 6x6 boxes of 2⅝ inches, 5x5 boxes of 3 1-8 inches, 4x4 boxes of 4 inches, and 3x3 boxes of 5¼ inches diameter. All the boxes in the same drawer are of the same depth and come almost flush with the top of the drawer, but where large and small eggs come in the same family a little maneuvering is necessary which in a large collection is simple.

I now come to the most important point of all, and that is the labeling; and it is here that I think Mr. Rockwell is at fault; in spite of what he says I feel sure that the triangular label must detract in some way from the appearance of the eggs.



NEST AND EGGS OF COMMON TEAL, LONG-TAILED DUCK, HARLEQUIN DUCK AND POCHARD, SHOWING METHOD OF LABELING

In the first place I always use round boxes, the name of the species pasted in the inside of the box, close up to the top edge and easily visible. Most of the data is written on the outside of the bottom of the box; for museums as well as private collections the average person does not want data, and anyone sufficiently interested will not mind the trouble of lifting the box (this you can easily do with the round box on account of the spaces between boxes, whereas in the square boxes fitting tightly in a drawer it is not so easy), and reading the particulars; these particulars if at all lengthy, could not possibly be written on the triangular label.

All my eggs are entered in my egg-book, each species under a number, and each set having a different set mark. Thus my number for Golden Eagle is 18. The first set would be 18 (and if c–2 both eggs would bear the same mark), the next set would be 18A, 18B, 18C, etc., etc., so that in a collection no two sets would ever bear the same marks.

All details are entered in the egg-book and some are so lengthy that a card would be of no use, nor, for the matter of that, the bottom of the box either; every egg in my collection is numbered and that number appears on the bottom of the box with data as far as possible, and if any further particulars are wanted it is very easy to refer to the egg-book.

It may be argued that handling the boxes would be detrimental to the contents, but the cotton wool is so arranged that the pressure of the glass lid is sufficient to keep the eggs from moving and in fact the glass just touches the eggs; I have found this method very useful in sending eggs for exhibition for lectures, etc.

as each egg has not to be separately packed. I have had eggs so arranged for over 30 years, and the cotton wool is as clean as when it was put in, showing that at any rate the boxes are dust-proof. We are fortunately not troubled with many insect pests, our great enemy being the damp, and this as a rule can be guarded against.

I enclose a few photographs showing the different sizes of the boxes. [Two of these photos are reproduced herewith.—ED.]

*Burnage, England.*

## A MONTH'S BIRD-COLLECTING IN VENEZUELA

By JOHN F. FERRY

AFTER a four days' sea journey from Panama, in a large English steamship, I arrived in La Guayra, Venezuela on April 21, 1908. An enormous mountain, La Sella, frowns down upon the little seaport huddling upon the narrow strip of shore at its base. The town is hot and unhealthy, and I was glad to spend but one night there and leave next morning for Caracas. The railroad journey thither is one of the most magnificent in the world. The steep ascent requires the track to wind in and out along the sides of deep canyons, and affords a view of the deep blue Caribbean sea and its palm-lined shore for great distances. The day after arriving in Caracas my bird-collecting, for the Field Museum of Natural History, began.

The valley in which Caracas lies is an extensive level plain surrounded by stately hills. To the north lies the great Sella mountain, which rises 9000 feet almost perpendicularly from the sea, one of the grandest spectacles in the world. Most of the mountains about Caracas are bare, the soil being red and sun-baked. Canyons are usually forested, as are also many of the mountain tops. The plain during the dry season is extremely arid and parched, but like our dry southwest the rainy season transforms such a waste into fields of waving grass and flowers. Irrigation is carried on extensively and fields of cane and other crops relieve the eye with their broad stretches of green. The little river Guaire flows thru the valley and most of its course is thru cultivated fields. Its banks are lined with dense brakes of cane. Coffee plantations are much in evidence. They are very attractive to the eye of the traveller. The coffee bushes resemble a miniature orchard, the trees being planted in rows and of a dark green color. The blossoms are beautiful and are very fragrant. But the most curious feature of the coffee plantation is the magnificent, tall shade trees whose branches interweave far overhead, and keep the hot tropical sun from the delicate coffee bushes. These plantations are usually favorite bird haunts; and particularly so in the Caracas Valley where there are practically no native forests. In these coffee plantations birds are found in surprising numbers, and here the collector strolls back and forth, often not knowing which one of several desired species to shoot, so great is the variety of birds there. One tall tree growing in the coffee plantations bears red, star-like blossoms which contain a small fruit. This tree is as popular with the birds as our choke-cherry tree at home, and often most of a morning's collecting was done beneath one tree. At one time I have seen several species of hummers, coerebas, euethias, yellow warblers, flycatchers, several species of tanagers, orioles, paroquets, robin-like thrushes, grosbeaks and woodpeckers. The only difficulty encountered was the great height