

# THE CONDOR

An Illustrated Magazine  
of Western Ornithology

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## EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

In the vote regarding simplified spelling, 107 Cooper Club members expressed their opinion distinctly one way or the other. There were 44 votes for the continued use of simplified spelling in our magazine and 63 votes against it. Thus the Editor was disappointed in his cherished hope. He has become convinced that people are innately averse to an *abrupt* change even when admittedly to a considerable degree beneficial in its bearings. Just as with song sparrows and chipmunks, modifications, in adjustment to changing environment, are matters of slow and gradual transition. As with these animals, too, variations are more extreme and rapid on the frontier of invasion. The species becomes plastic under stress of new conditions. The vote in the West alone gives a majority for simplified spelling.

We are informed that Mr. Wilfred H. Osgood, with Mr. Stanley G. Jewett as assistant, is about to leave for South America where zoological field work is to be carried on in the Andes Mountains in Venezuela and Colombia. This expedition is sent out under the auspices of the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago.

The Northern Division of the Cooper Club has settled upon the third Saturday evening of each month as a regular time of meeting. Distant members who happen to visit the San Francisco Bay region should remember this, and also that until further notice meetings are

held in the research room of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley.

Austin Paul Smith has established himself at Orizaba, Mexico, for a period of field work with the birds of that region.

Denver newspapers report that great numbers of wild ducks have died in the Bear River district of Utah. There is apparently some epidemic resembling the roup of chickens, which is afflicting the water fowl to such an extent that gunners are leaving them alone, not finding it enjoyable to shoot or eat sick birds.

Students of California ornithology will be interested to know that there are at present 525 species of birds definitely recorded from within the limits of the State of California. Of these, 163 are water birds and 362 land birds.

We are pleased to announce that Mr. W. L. Dawson has come south with carefully elaborated plans for the preparation of a sumptuous and exhaustive work upon the Birds of California. Mr. Dawson brings to his proposed task a unique equipment. Endowed with excellent taste, and skilled in photography, he is also schooled in business methods and does his own "managing." He writes with great acceptance and his knowledge of the scientific framework of his profession is beyond that of most "popular" writers. While he is not a "native son", he is thoroughly imbued with the western spirit; and his experience of fifteen years in the State of Washington gives him a great leverage in the ready understanding of the birds of California. Moreover, his very ability to look at the local conditions with fresh eyes will be a positive advantage in the exposition of our bird life, when to it is added the experience of older workers who long ago ceased to wonder. A keen eye, a ready pen, a sparkling style, coupled with a conscientious striving for accuracy of statement, and, above all, a sense of what the public needs, make our friend from Washington singularly well fitted to lead in an enterprise such as the one contemplated.

Mr. Dawson comes frankly asking the help of the members of the Cooper Ornithological Club. His task would be difficult of accomplishment alone. He must, in the nature of the case, be largely dependent upon the accumulated results of the labor of others, both published and unpublished. And since even this is insufficient, as yet, as we all know, he is especially desirous of enlisting the friendly services of as many other bird students as possible in a five year campaign of cooperative observation. Mr. Dawson will himself spend the best part of the next five years afield with his cameras and a trained assistant, visiting out-of-the-way places, as well as the better known bird-haunts, in quest of material for the new book. In this way he will be able to familiarize himself with the ground so as to edit the work of others intelligently, as well as to make some original contribution to our knowledge of the birds of California.

There can be no question of our need for just

such a work as the one proposed. Photographic processes and methods of reproduction have now reached a stage of perfection which makes the full and artistic representation of our bird-life not only desirable but imperative. There is, so far as we have been informed, no promise of any other such work in the reasonably near future. Yet the popular interest in birds is really very great. It is undeveloped, latent, often unintelligent indeed, but it is really more powerful and more nearly universal than many of us who follow ornithology as a hobby or as a science are aware. A work addressed to this larger public will be of the greatest value, not only in the direct service of that public, but in guaranteeing a more intelligent consideration of the legislative and protective measures and in arousing a more ready support for museums and other scientific institutions. Mr. Dawson is the man to do this work in California and we rejoice at his coming.

We own we are a little dazed by the brilliancy of the program outlined by the author: editions de luxe, and illustrations on a scale of magnificence rarely if ever before attempted in the history of American bird-book making; but Mr. Dawson made good in Washington, both as a writer and as a book-builder, and there is no reason that we can see why he should not achieve success here in California.

Mr. Dawson's plans have been enthusiastically ratified in open meeting by both divisions of the Cooper Club; and the Club is pledged to extend to the new enterprise its fullest moral support. The name of the Club is to be associated with that of the author upon the title page of "The Birds of California" and the work is to be, in so far as it is possible, a cooperative one.

With characteristic energy the author launched the canvass for the new work in San Francisco immediately upon receiving the Club's endorsement and under the patronage of the Messrs. Mailiard has succeeded in enlisting enough influential support to assure a good beginning and to justify the expectation of a general public interest. He has now gone to Pasadena and Los Angeles to develop the local interest there, and expects at the close of a six weeks campaign to complete the organization of The Birds of California Publishing Company which is to finance the new undertaking. In a succeeding issue of this magazine we shall expect Mr. Dawson to set forth in detail the scope and specifications of the proposed work, as well as to tell us more particularly how Cooper Club members may cooperate.

#### PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF PIMA COUNTY, ARIZONA. By STEPHEN SARGENT VISHER. [From *The Auk*, vol. XXVII, July 1910, pp. 279-288.]

This list of 127 species covers a part of the ground that was treated in great detail by W. E. D. Scott in *The Auk* for 1886-88, and is published partly for the purpose of adding several species not included in Scott's list, and largely

(according to the introduction) with "the desire to add a mite to the far too meagre knowledge of the habits and songs of many interesting birds." As it is seldom that more than a line or two is devoted to a species, this phase of the subject is perhaps not entered into as exhaustively as might be expected from the introductory remark. Two species are here recorded from Arizona for the first time, the White-headed Woodpecker and the Golden Plover, neither from specimens actually secured. The list is all through compared with that of Scott's and it is put forward largely as a compilation of the additional ornithological notes and information accumulated since the publication of the latter. Yet we find numerous species recorded precisely as Scott treated them, but placed in the category of those found under different conditions.

The Green-tailed Towhee, Lutescent Warbler, and Yellow-headed Blackbird are casually mentioned as breeding in the vicinity of Tucson, records of sufficient importance to merit more detailed accounts—to say the least. So also with Mr. Visher's working out of the distribution of various closely related sub-species. To say that *Dendroica auduboni nigrifrons* is "resident" on the mountain tops, while *D. auduboni auduboni* nests in the valleys, that *Phalaenoptilus nuttalli nilidus* breeds in the mountains and *P. nuttalli nuttalli* in the valleys, and that *Sialia mexicana occidentalis* breeds in the spruces and *S. m. bairdi* in the pines, is, perhaps, definite enough; but these are positive statements that require much field work and the collecting of many specimens to back them up before they can be expected to be generally accepted.

On the whole, the important records are not put forward in such a way as to invite confidence in them, the statements regarding certain of the species are exactly such as have already been published about the same birds in the same general region, and the comments upon others are of absolute unimportance.

This list does not seem to have been carefully considered, and might well have been left unpublished.—H. S. S.

WATER BIRDS OF THE VICINITY OF POINT PINOS, CALIFORNIA, by ROLLO HOWARD BECK. (Proceedings Calif. Acad. Sciences, 4th ser., vol. iii, pp. 57-72; issued Sep. 17, 1910).

In this paper we are provided with the most important contribution to a knowledge of the oceanic bird-life of California since the appearance of the last one of Loomis's series of papers, in December, 1900. During the past seven years Beck, in his work for the California Academy of Sciences, has spent all put together 26 months in collecting water birds of Monterey Bay, with Pacific Grove as a basis. The results of his work in specimens, up to the San