

# THE CONDOR

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J. GRINNELL, Editor, Berkeley, California

HARRY S. SWARTH, Associate Editor

J. EVGENE LAW

W. LEE CHAMBERS } Business Managers

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## EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

Ornithologists have always found difficulty in satisfactorily expressing the varying degrees of abundance of the species in a region. In spite of efforts to attain to an accurate diagnosis through statistical methods, no practically workable scheme is forthcoming. We still rely on various words, of very indefinite meaning to be sure, but which give to the mind some notion of numbers of individuals as compared with what they might be under ideal circumstances.

In *Science* for June 14, 1912, page 930, Mr. John Dryden Kuser calls attention to the multiplicity of words used, and misused, to designate relative abundance. He chooses a scale of eight members, as providing to his mind a workable nomenclature of occurrence. These are: abundant, common, frequent, uncommon, occasional, rare, scarce and irregular.

To our minds just four terms come nearer the ticket: abundant, common, fairly common, and rare. "Fairly common" equals Kuser's "frequent", the latter being objectionable because of equivocal meaning. Any closer definition, short of actual censuses, seems to us futile. Of course other qualifying terms may be employed to advantage. A winter visitant may be common, and either regularly or irregularly so. Another species may be rare but regular in its appearance, or it may be rare and casual (that is, "accidental", though we dislike the latter term). Uncommon, occasional, rare, and scarce, are too nearly synonymous to be serviceable all at the same time; "rare" is sufficient.

In this connection we wish to point out the flagrant misuse of the word "resident" in many lists and even authoritative text-books, where birds are described as being "summer residents" or "winter residents". Explicitly, *resident* means inhabiting a region continually, that is, throughout the year. Birds are either resident or non-resident (migrant); if of the latter class, they are either summer visitants, winter visitants or transients. A "visitant" may remain a few days in midwinter only, or it may be with us six months including the breeding season. A transient is, as a rule, a species which summers wholly north of the particular locality concerned and winters south of it; so that it occurs only during the period of migration.

The four seasonal categories of birds may therefore be correctly alluded to as resident, summer visitant, winter visitant, and transient. Relative numbers of individuals involved may be denoted by the terms abundant, common, fairly common, and rare.

Should the above suggestions have aroused difference of opinion on the part of any of our readers, we would be glad to publish open letters upon the subject.—J. G.

Mr. George Willett is spending the months of July and August in the vicinity of Sitka, Alaska, where he is making a study of the bird-life on the St. Lazaria Bird Reservation. This work is being carried on under the direction of Dr. T. S. Palmer and in the interests of the National Association of Audubon Societies.

Mr. Alexander Wetmore is stationed for the year in Porto Rico, where he is conducting investigations into the economic relations of the native birds under the auspices of the Bureau of Biological Survey. Mr. Wetmore reports a successful time so far. Porto Rican birds are relatively few in species, but many individually, and are thus important to local interests.

Pacific Coast Avifauna numbers 7 and 8 will be mailed free to Cooper Club members about August first. Number 7 is Willett's *Birds of the Pacific Slope of Southern California*; number 8 is *A Systematic List of the Birds of California* by J. Grinnell.

The Editors beg to remind Cooper Club members that short "Field and Study" notes are of usually greater interest to the average reader of *THE CONDOR*, than the longer and more formal general articles. The season's experiences should have provided each one of us with information worth contributing in this way.

## PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

A HISTORY OF | THE BIRDS OF COLORADO | By WILLIAM LUTLEY SCLATER | M. A. [etc. two lines]. | With seventeen Plates and a Map | Witherby & Co. | 326 High Holborn London | 1912 | 8vo, pp. i-xxiv, 1-576 (Cloth, \$5.00 net).

This, the latest addition to the State bird lists, is a thick octavo of nearly six hundred pages and with so much of it in fine print as to represent a very large amount of material. The book is dedicated to Gen. W. J. Palmer and the statement is made in the introduction that it was in accordance with his desire that the work was undertaken, and that the expenses of publication "have been defrayed by his sister-in-law, Mrs. William Lutley Sclater, and his brother-in-law, Mr. Chase Mellen, of New York." A photograph of Gen. Palmer faces the title page.

The birds of the State, 392 [=really 395] in number, are divided into several categories: breeders 225, winter residents 28, migrants 33, and casual 106. There is an elaborate system of keys to families, genera and species constructed for the most part on the best modern lines, though occasionally they fail to be dichotomous. Under each species there is given first its printed records in Colorado and the reference to each, these references by the help of the bibliography being reduced to least possible compass. Next follows a rather full but very concise description of the adult male plumage, with a statement of the difference shown by the female and young. A paragraph gives the general distribution of the species, which is followed by a full statement of its range in Colorado, with the authority for each record. Under the heading of habits are given facts concerning the food, nesting, and various other interesting items.

As remarked in the introduction, the present volume is "founded on the very complete collection of Colorado birds formed during the last thirty-five years by Mr. Charles E. Aiken, of Colorado Springs." Mr. Aiken's collection is one of the largest ever brought together in the State and the most valuable part of the book consists in the numerous records from this collection now for the first time made public. The collection furnishes two new birds for Colorado—*Chordeiles acutipennis texensis*, taken by Mr. Aiken near Trinidad, and *Empidonax traillii alnorum*, taken by him near Limon—and restores one form—*Coccyzus americanus*—that was at one time admitted to the State list but had been dropped for lack of positive proof of its occurrence.

The seventeen reproductions of excellent photographs by Rockwell, Warren and Nash are printed on a high-grade paper that presents them to good advantage.

The volume contains an elaborate bibliography comprising "a list of all the titles up to December, 1910, containing anything of importance for the study of Colorado or-

nithology." The list numbers 294 titles. The four publications of Cooke on Colorado birds had listed 343 titles in his bibliographies. Sclater omits 75 of these in his bibliography and adds 17 published previous to 1909 and 9 titles that appeared in 1910, making the 294 titles. Including the 91 less important titles, Cooke's bibliographies totaled 434 titles, to which he can now add 93 more, making a total of 527 titles in his Colorado bibliography.

A useful feature of the volume is a "Gazetteer" of the several hundred localities mentioned in the work. The volume closes with an unusually full and satisfactory index.

Mr. Sclater has made good use of his opportunities and has produced a thoroughly good book. It is up to date in its nomenclature and faultless in its typography. It easily takes rank among the very best of the State bird lists.—W. W. C.

## MINUTES OF COOPER CLUB MEETINGS

### SOUTHERN DIVISION

APRIL—The April meeting of the Southern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was held on Thursday evening, April 25, 1912, in the office of H. J. Lelande, 246 Wilcox building, Los Angeles, with President Morcom in the chair and the following members present: Blaine, Chambers, Daggett, Gray, Howell, Howard, Hubbs, Antonin and Alphonse Jay, Judson, Lamb, Miller, Owen Rich, Robertson, Wood.

The President appointed Mr. Daggett as Secretary.

The minutes of the Southern Division for March were read and approved. A newspaper clipping of an article by Mr. J. Buckland, of the Royal Colonial Institute, England, was read. This dealt with the terrible inroads on bird life due to the demands of fashion for plumage.

On motion of Robertson, seconded by Miller, and duly carried, the Secretary was instructed to cast the ballot electing to active membership Mr. James Buckland, proposed at the last meeting.

Applications for membership were presented as follows: Lansing K. Tevis, Bakersfield Calif., proposed by J. S. Douglas; Kate W. McGraw, 2301 Hearst avenue, Berkeley, and Asa C. Chandler, Maplewood, N. J., both proposed by H. C. Bryant; George Wood Hollywood, Calif., proposed by J. E. Law; C. W. Chamberlain, Lancaster, Mass., proposed by A. B. Howell.

On motion carried the resignation of Willis H. Jackson was duly accepted. Adjourned.—F. S. DAGGETT, *Sec'y pro tem.*