

## PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

A REVISION OF THE SUBSPECIES OF THE GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens* [LINNAEUS]). By HARRY C. OBERHOLSER. [—Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., vol. 42, 1912, pp. 529-577.]

In this monograph the author concludes that a proper comprehension of the group in question calls for the recognition of no less than twelve new subspecies, which, with the six previously named forms also recognized in the paper, gives a total of eighteen geographic races of the Green Heron described and discussed.

The new varieties are all from the West Indies, Mexico, and Central America, and their recognition in nowise affects the present arrangement of the A. O. U. Check-List—doubtless to the relief of many. Our southwestern form, *Butorides virescens anthonyi*, is mentioned as one of the best characterized forms of the species; the geographic range ascribed to it is essentially the same as that outlined in the Check-List, though given, of course, in greater detail.

The recognition of such a number of slightly differentiated subspecies (there is one allotted to each of the larger Lesser Antilles south of Guadeloupe, with the exception of St. Vincent) is justified by the author in the following terms: "In the West Indies, either we must recognize a large number of additional forms or merge all. \* \* \* To adopt the latter alternative, however, would be to obscure all the evident and highly interesting, though to some extent puzzling, geographical variations which these West Indian birds exhibit. The writer has, therefore, adopted the former course, as better representing the facts. \* \* \* In one or two cases where forms are separated by a wide geographic area and by intervening races, it has been thought better to recognize by name slight average differences, rather than to refer such a bird to a distant and isolated race, to which, although superficially very similar, it could have no close phylogenetic relationship. This, of course, is the same problem that one meets often in wide-ranging and plastic groups, and which, it seems to the writer, would be in much the best way solved by assigning a name to the isolated colony, if there can be found any characters at all, however slight, to serve as a basis."

The argument is logical and convincing, but even those of us most inclined to admit it, will, I believe, be relieved that the various changes in the group under discussion come no nearer home! Here in the west we have our "colonies" of various species of birds, to which no one as yet has ventured to affix separate names; when they are migratory

forms the difficulty of treatment is much increased.

Mr. Oberholser's treatment of the Green Herons, from the amount of material handled, and the evident care with which the problems involved have been worked out, will probably remain authoritative for some time to come.—H. S. SWARTH.

A PARTIAL ACCOUNT OF THE BIRDS IN THE VICINITY OF LAGUNA BEACH. BY LEON GARDNER [First Annual Report of Laguna Marine Laboratory, 1912, pp. 187-194.]

A briefly annotated list of fifty-eight species observed during the summer near Laguna and Balboa, on the coast of Orange County, in southern California. The birds are for the most part those known to frequent the general region, but we may, perhaps, be allowed to question the inclusion in the list of both *Toxostoma r. redivivum* and *T. r. pasadenense* as well as *Catherpes mexicanus conspersus*. The use of the term "Brown Blackbird" in place of the familiar "Brewer Blackbird" does not seem a very happy innovation. The observation and accompanying collecting of the birds seems to have been done, judging from the annotations, largely for the study of their parasites.—H. S. SWARTH.

BIRDS OF THE PACIFIC SLOPE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, by GEORGE WILLETT. [—COOPER ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB, PACIFIC COAST AVIFAUNA No. 7, 1912, pp. 1-122.]

This publication was mailed to all members of the Cooper Ornithological Club, under date of July 25, 1912. One can only wonder at the efficient management of a club that permits it to send its members, in addition to THE CONDOR, such important publications as this, in return for the small membership fee.

It is needless to say that the appearance of this list has been watched for with more than usual interest by the active workers in the Club, as the work is, in its aim, a recapitulation of all that is known of one phase of the avifauna of southern California. Since 1898, Grinnell's "Birds of the Pacific Slope of Los Angeles County" has been the main reliance of bird students of southern California, and Mr. Willett states in his "Introduction" that it was the first idea of the Club merely to revise this list. The territory, however, was finally extended to include not only the Pacific slope of Los Angeles County, but that of all the rest of southern California, as well. This territory, roughly mapped, includes all that section south of the mountains dividing northern and southern California, and west of the ranges extending from the San Jacinto mountains to the Mexican line, cutting off the Colorado desert to the eastward. The list also includes all of the Santa

Barbara group of islands, eight in number, off the coast of southern California, whereas the Grinnell list included only the water birds in the vicinity of Santa Catalina and Santa Barbara islands. Aside from the increase of territory covered, the present paper closely follows the model set by Grinnell in his 1898 list, especially in the concise manner of recording facts.

Mr. Willett, more than any other southern California ornithologist, has given special attention to the birds occurring along the shore and among the islands off the coast, and his activity has, in a way, set the pace for others, with the result that an immense amount of data has been accumulated. Some of this has been published in random notes, but much of it was kept in cold storage in the inaccessible note books of individual workers. The Club, therefore, was particularly happy in its selection of a collaborator so well qualified to carry out the work. His long list of "acknowledgements" indicates how zealously he has followed up every source of information available. Besides this formal acknowledgement, full credit is given in the body of the work to each individual contributor. Previous to 1898, when the Grinnell list was issued, aside from occasional trips to the islands and along the beaches, no systematic work was done among the water fowl and shore birds. Since that time, under the example of Mr. Willett, that branch of ornithology has been actively investigated, with the result that some thirty-nine species have been added to those recorded in 1898. The total number of three hundred land and water birds recorded in 1898, has been increased to 377 in the present paper, about equally distributed between the land birds, and the shore and water birds. Much of this increase, however, is accounted for by the more extensive territory covered and the greater number of workers over the larger area. The work previous to 1898, was centered in scarcely half a dozen earnest students, in a limited area.

In many cases the notes enable us to make comparisons with conditions which existed previous to 1898. For instance, Grinnell and Gaylord visited a colony of Cassin Auklet (*Ptychoramphus aleuticus*) on Santa Barbara Island on May 16, 1897. In June, 1911, Mr. Willett found "that the old breeding colony of these birds was entirely abandoned. From the bones and feathers of this bird found all over the island, I concluded that they had been exterminated by the cats with which the island is infested. On a detached rocky islet, a quarter of a mile from the main island, I found about one hundred pairs of auklets nesting." It seems that the cat question has thrust itself even to the islands of the Pacific!

The list adheres closely to the nomenclature employed in the A. O. U. Check-List of 1910, although in a number of instances the author differs from this authority on questions of distribution of certain species and subspecies. Indeed, who of our California workers does not? In each case he gives full reason for his contrary opinions. A hypothetical list gives eighteen species of more or less doubtful occurrence. The paper concludes with an index of the scientific and common names of all species noted. That this contribution has passed under the able editorship of Joseph Grinnell and Harry S. Swarth, vouches for its high standard in every respect. Indeed, Pacific Coast Avifauna No. 7 maintains the high standard set by the previous publications of the Club, and is a model which may be enlarged upon, but can scarcely be improved.

FRANK S. DAGGETT.

MAGEN- UND GEWOLLUNTERSUCHUNGEN UNSERER EINHEIMISCHEN RAUBVOGEL, by DR. EUGEN GRESCHIK. [—*Aquila*, vol. 18, pp. 111-177, 6 figs. in text].

One of the first, and in our estimation one of the best of the publications of the U. S. Biological Survey, was Fisher's "Hawks and Owls of the United States." As the economic value of the birds of prey is far more evident than that of other birds, it seems very fitting that these birds should be the first ones to be considered by the economic ornithologist. In several foreign countries interest is centered at the present time in the food of hawks and owls.

In *Aquila* for 1911, Dr. Eugen Greschik continues a report of his researches on the food of the native birds of prey of Hungary. The paper is entitled: "Stomach and Pellet Examination of Our Native Birds of Prey." The first installment, published in *Aquila* for 1910, furnished evidence as to the food of the hawks, whereas the more recent article deals with the owls.

The introduction to the last contribution points out the need of protection for owls, owing to the great yearly slaughter. Evidence is advanced that at least 11,593 Uhreulen and 18,738 other owls were shot in 1907. Attention is called to the value of these birds to the agriculturist and forester, so that better protection may result. Reference is also made to the economic work of the U. S. Biological Survey, and to that of certain European museums and societies. Emphasis is laid on the necessity of "positive data" as to the food of birds as a means of determining their real value.

A discussion of the food of the seven species of owls to be found in Hungary forms the main part of the paper. Short descriptions of the habitat and habits, and figures of the