

# THE CONDOR

A Magazine of  
Western Ornithology

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Cooper Ornithological Club

J. GRINNELL, Editor, Berkeley, California

HARRY S. SWARTH, Associate Editor

J. EUGENE LAW }  
W. LEE CHAMBERS } Business Managers

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## EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

The Business Manager's report of the Cooper Club's financial standing at the close of the year 1912 is a model commercial document. The itemized statements of receipts and expenditures are accompanied by a full inventory of Club property. While lack of space prevents giving the 7-page report in full, the following summary shows the main points as regards money transactions:

Balance in bank, January 2, 1912.....	\$ 333.35
Dues received during 1912.....	691.22
Subscriptions during 1912.....	167.20
Sale of Avifaunas.....	24.50
Sale of back numbers of CONDOR.....	121.60
Donations, etc.....	3.00
Advertising.....	43.45
<b>Total Receipts.....</b>	<b>\$1384.32</b>
Cost of printing CONDOR.....	760.98
Cost of illustrations.....	167.50
Club expenses.....	43.96
Miscellaneous expenditures, chiefly connected with CONDOR.....	168.49
Cost of store-room.....	61.85
<b>Total Expenses.....</b>	<b>\$1202.78</b>
Balance in bank January 2, 1913.....	\$ 181.54
Cash on hand, not deposited.....	31.59
Total available cash.....	213.13
Outstanding 1912 bills payable.....	191.35

Net Balance.....\$ 21.78

The financing of Avifaunas 7 and 8 is accounted for separately. Their cost (\$500.00) was raised by donation.

Mr. Harry S. Swarth, for nearly five years Curator of Birds in the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, transferred his affiliation on February first to the new Museum of History, Science and Art, in Los Angeles. The change is accompanied by considerable increase in responsibility as well as in remuneration. While we see in this advancement a well deserved recognition of Mr. Swarth's efficiency there is one element that seems to us regrettable, namely, that the prospects point towards his time being henceforth so fully occupied with executive routine that ornithology will receive correspondingly less attention from his judicious and accurate pen.

In the great majority of cases nowadays, when a young man reaches an advanced degree of proficiency in bird-study, the ability thus developed makes him desirable in some executive berth, and the matter of salary concludes the argument. At present, there appear to be practically no purely research positions in ornithology, offering anywhere near an adequate livelihood, available to the talented and ambitious young student anywhere in America. Very nearly all the published ornithology turned out is a bi-product of busy men's activities, which are by necessity centered elsewhere.

The following excerpts from a recent circular letter sent out from the Smithsonian Institution show progress in Mr. A. C. Bent's undertaking to carry on the life history project so ably begun by Bendire.

In 1910 arrangements were made with the Smithsonian Institution for the completion of the work on the life histories of North American birds, which was originally projected by Major Charles E. Bendire, and of which the Institution published two volumes. For over twenty years Mr. Bent has devoted his spare time to visiting various points of ornithological interest in North America for the purpose of collecting the information, photographs and specimens necessary for an extensive work on the breeding habits of North American birds.

Major Bendire's first volume began with the Gallinae, A. O. U. number 289, and his second volume ended with the Icteridae, A. O. U. number 513, including 223 species in the two volumes. Considering the fact that comparatively little is known about many of the water-birds and that many of the ocean wanderers and stragglers need little more than passing mention as American birds, it seems safe to count on covering all of the first part of the A. O. U. check-list, up to the point at which he began, in two volumes. The present plan, which is subject to revision, is to have the first of the new volumes include the Anatidae at least as far as the geese; but as the life histories of many of the Tubinares will be decidedly brief, it may be well to include all of the Anatidae in this first volume.

The work of gathering information, material and contributions for the life histories has been partially organized on a very satisfactory

basis. As it is impracticable, if not impossible, for any one man to know and keep in touch with all of the competent observers and contributors in North America, it has seemed best to place this work in the hands of competent leaders in various sections, who are tried and willing to take charge of the work in their particular localities, to endeavor to arouse interest among their acquaintances in collecting information, to secure contributions from competent and reliable observers, and to pass judgment on the accuracy and reliability of whatever they send in for publication. The following well-known western ornithologists are among those who have already generously volunteered to serve in this capacity: Mr. Edw. K. Warren for Colorado; Mr. Aretas A. Saunders for Montana; Mr. Altan Brooks for British Columbia; Mr. S. F. Rathbun for Washington; Mr. Wm. L. Finley for Oregon; and Mr. A. B. Howell for California.

Nearly all of these collaborators have reported more or less success in arousing interest in the work among their correspondents, and considerable material has been sent in and filed away for future use; but in far too many cases the results of their labors have been disappointingly small.

Eighteen life histories have already been written, but as they contain mainly the results of the author's personal observations, together with such quotations from published material as seemed desirable to make them more nearly complete, they are open to additional contributions from others, as well as final revision. Preference will always be given to original contributions; quotations from published literature will be reduced to a minimum and contributors will be given full credit for whatever material they furnish.

Mr. Bent already has in his own field-notes nearly enough material to write the life histories of over half of the species to be included in the next volume, but, even after exhausting all the material contained in the published literature on the subject, there are surprisingly few species regarding which we have sufficient material for even fairly complete life histories. An extensive study of the published material brings to light some interesting facts; a vast amount of data has been published on migration and distribution; nesting habits have been written up more fully than any other phase of the subject, and much has been written about the food of birds, particularly from an economic standpoint; but the exact period of incubation and of the development of the young has been carefully worked out for very few species, the sequence of plumages in the water-birds has been sadly neglected, and comparatively little has been published on winter habits.

For many of the water-birds, only the most meagre life histories could be culled from the published literature on the subject. To collate and compile in an extensive work on this subject all that has been published relating to the life histories of North American birds is an undertaking well worth while; but the value of any work of this kind is greatly en-

hanced by a liberal addition of original material, which was a marked feature of Major Bendire's work.

There are few ornithologists who cannot find the time to study effectively some phases of the life histories of one or more species which are readily accessible. There is much information which is badly needed and which could easily be obtained; much information of value lies buried in the field-notes of nearly every observer; even fragmentary notes are often valuable as contributions to life histories; and it is only by collecting as much of this material as possible that we can hope to get anything even approaching completeness.

All possible information is desired on the following points in the life histories of as many species as are available for study: 1. Extent and dates of spring migration. 2. Date of arrival on breeding grounds. 3. Mating performances. 4. Location of nest. 5. Construction of nest. 6. Number of eggs and date of laying. 7. Period of incubation. 8. Do both sexes incubate? 9. Number of broods in a season, with dates. 10. Food and development of young. 11. Sequence of plumages to maturity. 12. Seasonal moults of adults. 13. Food and feeding habits of adults. 14. Flight; swimming or diving habits. 15. Behavior with relation to other species. 16. Vocal powers and their significance. 17. Extent and dates of fall migration. 18. Winter home and habits.

Californians should correspond with our own state representative, Mr. A. B. Howell, Covina, California.

## COMMUNICATION

### MISINFORMATION

Editor THE CONDOR:

As an instance of crass scientific ignorance I believe that Mr. Wm. D. Boyce, as evidenced in his "Illustrated South America", recently published by Rand, McNally & Co., quite surpasses anything I have seen. He mentions finding in Peru "doves' eggs, which are found deposited in the sand on the banks of the streams. The doves do not 'set' on their eggs, but let the sun hatch them out. The eggs do not have a shell like our birds' eggs, but a tough film like a snake egg." I assure you this is *verbatim*, and written by a man who has travelled extensively and apparently for the purpose of gathering and publishing statistics!

In other places he speaks of the "cow fish" in Peru and of "Potassium iodine" in Chili!

Of course one does not expect all travellers to be infallible; but with so many scientific institutions to refer to it seems an unpardonable carelessness to put on record, in a book supposed to be authentic, such absurdities as the above. It is of but slight use to publish at this late date the correction, and inform the distinguished author that doves do not lay soft-shelled eggs in sand, leaving that to the alligators, turtles and iguanas; or that the "cow fish" is no fish at all but a mammal; or that "Potassium iodine" is as impossible a