

Oregon Fish and Game Commission, and the United States Department of Agriculture. Mr. Vernon Bailey, of the United States Biological Survey, is directing the field operations.

Mr. Tracy I. Storer, Secretary of the Northern Division, C. O. C., is giving a course on "The Birds of California" during the Summer Session of the University of California, June 22 to August 1, 1914. The course consists of lectures upon the more general phases of the subject, field work with the birds found on the campus, and laboratory study of specimens contained in the University collections.

At the recent meeting of the Pacific Association of Scientific Societies at the University of Washington, Seattle, a small but enthusiastic band of Cooper Club members met and considered matters of interest to ornithologists in the Pacific Northwest. The Club is indebted to Professor George F. Sykes, of the Oregon Agricultural College, for arousing interest and arranging for the meeting.

Mr. George Willett is spending the summer on Forrester Island, southeastern Alaska, where he is acting as warden of the Federal Bird Reservation constituted by that island.

Mr. A. C. Bent toured the western states during the spring and early summer gathering material for his "Life Histories of North American Birds." While in California he made a special point of visiting various bird collections, both public and private, for the purpose of examining specimens of water-birds showing molt.

Mr. Adriaan van Rossem collected in parts of Kern County, California, during the spring months, in the interests of the Mailliards. Among the specimens sent in is something brand-new in the red-winged blackbird line, announcement of which will shortly be made by Mr. Joseph Mailliard.

Parts of May and June were spent by Mr. Chas. L. Camp in exploring zoologically the eastern section of the Mohave Desert centering at Turtle Mountain. The resulting maps, notes and specimens have been contributed by Mr. Camp to the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.

It is a satisfaction to be able to announce in these columns that California is to have a state-wide campaign against the impending referendum, and threatened initiative, which have for their combined object the legalization of the *marketing* of all game and fish. Authoritative testimony, among the sources of which is no less an institution than the United States Department of Agriculture, insists that free marketing can only lead to the prompt extermination of our wild game species. The proposed campaign will be under the immediate manage-

ment of Mr. Walter P. Taylor, whose previous experience in conservation work brings confidence that success will attend his efforts now. A considerable fund has been placed at Mr. Taylor's disposal for the purpose of defraying the cost of the various measures planned to secure publicity. Indeed, such a campaign as this, resolves itself into a matter of *educating the public* as to the facts in the case and correct interpretations therefrom. The campaign will occupy the three full months immediately preceding the November election, and Mr. Taylor's headquarters will be at the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley.

## COMMUNICATIONS

### THE CONDOR: A MAGAZINE OF VERTEBRATE NATURAL HISTORY?

Shall the scope of THE CONDOR be extended to cover mammals, reptiles and amphibians, *as well as* birds? An informal vote from Cooper Club members is hereby requested by the undersigned. The proposition will not be presented for formal consideration before the two Divisions of the Club unless a straw vote indicates general consent among all Cooper Club members. The following ideas bearing on the proposition have occurred to the writer.

There is now no one medium for the publication of natural history notes concerning all these vertebrate classes.

Interest in other vertebrate groups than birds would tend to be developed in our specialized bird students, and a knowledge of birds would be brought to the attention of specialists in the other groups. The broadened horizon would be to the advantage of all.

Interrelations, ecologic and economic, between the several vertebrate classes are so close that to secure a general familiarity with all assists to a better understanding of any one of them. Many of the problems in bird study will be more efficiently handled upon a basis of knowledge outside the group as well as within it.

THE CONDOR would become of interest to a much wider circle of readers. The circulation would be correspondingly extended.

The increased subscription list would warrant increased size of the magazine, so that eventually there would be added bulk. We would then have a more important and valuable magazine, provided always that an ideal standard of scientific accuracy combined with general interest be striven for.

The total amount of ornithological matter would not be diminished, except as subject to fluctuations resulting from the varying supply of suitable contributions.

As a vehicle of conservation propaganda, THE CONDOR of expanded scope would become more useful than at present, because game

mammals as well as birds are concerned. There would, however, be no more danger of this becoming either a sportsman's magazine or an exponent of sentimentalism than at present.

Purely technical matter would be given second place to life-histories, geographical notes, and field-and-study items, of the same character as those concerning birds alone and now appearing from issue to issue in THE CONDOR.

The auspices under which THE CONDOR is published should remain exactly as they are: the magazine would still be fostered by the Cooper Ornithological Club and would represent the interests of that organization to the highest degree.

Vote by postal card, "yes" or "no", with signature and date. Brief poignant comments are invited. Address before September 1:—J. GRINNELL, *University of California, Berkeley, California.*

#### DESTRUCTION OF BIRDS AS A RESULT OF VOLCANIC ACTION

[Editorial Note: Reports of the eruptive activity of Mount Lassen naturally arouse our interest as to the possible effects of such phenomena upon the animal life in the vicinity. The following letter indicates vividly how serious such a factor may become. We are indebted to Judge F. W. Henshaw both for calling our attention to this subject and for the privilege of publishing the letter. The authenticity of the account is established beyond doubt.]

Judge F. W. Henshaw,

San Francisco, California;

Dear Sir:

Referring to the conversation I had with you a few days ago, relative to the destruction of game birds in Alaska, resulting from the eruption of Katmai Volcano on June 6, 1912, I am sending you under separate cover the February, 1913, issue of the National Geographic Magazine, which contains a very comprehensive article by Dr. Geo. C. Martin, on the extent of damage caused by this eruption.

Some of the photographs accompanying the magazine article will give you a very vivid idea of the desolation that was caused, and what effect such a deposit as shown in the pictures would have on nesting birds, within the radius of the fall of ashes.

During the period of greatest volcanic activity, from June 6th to June 8th, 1912, birds would frequently drop from the air, and in every case that I witnessed, would be dead when they landed. This shows, I

believe, that the gases had a deadly effect on the mature birds while flying. I was at Kodiak during the eruption, distant about 100 miles from the volcano; so if the gases from the crater had such an effect on birds at that distance, it is safe to say that very few birds on the mainland of Alaska, and within the radius of the disturbance, could have escaped.

On June 9, 1912, I had occasion to make the trip by tug boat from Kodiak to Seward. For a distance of about 120 miles at sea, and until we passed beyond the line shown on the map on page 132 of the National Geographic Magazine, as the limit of the one-quarter inch ash deposit, the sea was literally covered with dead birds, of probably every variety known in that section of Alaska. I dare say, that during the entire progress of the trip, for 120 miles, there was not a time when from 15 to 20 dead birds could not be seen from the deck of the steamer. When one realizes that it would be impossible to distinguish these birds over an area exceeding the size of a pin point on the map, he can probably get some conception of the vast multitudes of birds that must have been destroyed.

Again, the eruption occurred during the nesting season, or when the young birds were too immature to fly. Nearly all the bays and indentations of the coast within the area of disturbance, as shown by the map referred to, are headed by large flat tracts of marshy land, with many small lakes and streams. These places are the natural breeding grounds of many varieties of our game birds, and it is safe to say that millions of these birds were on the nests at the time of the eruption. The country surrounding the large lakes, from Clarke Lake south on the Alaska Peninsula, is also a vast breeding ground, and most of this territory was covered by the deposit of ash.

Possibly the scarcity of mallard ducks during the 1912-13 hunting season in California can be attributed to some extent to this eruption. At any rate, this variety seems to be in greater abundance than any other during the nesting season in Alaska,—or that part of Alaska which was within the limits of the disturbance,—so I believe that the eruption must have affected, to some extent at least, the numbers of these birds that migrated south. [See also article above referred to, pages 179-181.—Ed.]

With kind regards, I am,

Very truly yours,

W. J. ERSKINE.

San Francisco, April 7, 1914.