

COMMUNICATION

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

To the Editors of THE CONDOR:

From the standpoint of the rarer birds, one of the greatest desiderata is a League for the Extermination of Amateur Ornithologists. I do not mean mere bird-lovers or "bird-chasers"—in *their* increase lies the birds' best hope—nor the professional ornithologist, who is a necessary minor evil. I refer to the man who collects bird-skins or eggs as a boy collects stamps; who is sure death to any rare bird that crosses his path, because he wants it either to complete his set or to trade. This includes the "no specimen, no record" man, who will sacrifice anything that flies for the satisfaction of clinching his claim to an unimportant record. It goes without saying that the ban should cover that noxious by-product of the accumulating instinct, the collector for revenue only, who ethically occupies a far lower position than the ordinary market hunter. I know, of course, that the number of birds and eggs that the amateur destroys is small in comparison with those that fall victims to natural agencies, but the latter are not supposed to be open to conviction.

Moreover, in the case of a rare bird, the collector becomes a relatively far more important influence in the process of extermination; and where a declining species is undergoing a sectional re-adjustment to changed conditions, he may well be the factor that turns the scale toward extinction.

So it is to be hoped that in the near future the man who collects bird-skins or eggs for private gratification or gain will be classed with the plume-hunter and be banished from respectable ornithological society.

To the hardened collector, this will of course seem like idle chatter, but it is written with the hope that it may appeal to some who are not too far gone in evil ways.

Yours sincerely,
H. GIFFORD,

Omaha, Nebraska, January 5, 1917.

[The above does not, of course, in any degree represent the views of the Editors of THE CONDOR. We give it space for the reason that it well represents the particular angle of view of the extreme bird-protectionist, the person whose field of vision is narrowed until he can see optimum good only in the conservation of each and every *individual* bird. He does not seem to realize that with the extermination of the *amateur* ornithologist, *scientific* ornithology is doomed to die out inside of one generation!—Editors.]

THE BIOLOGICAL SURVEY BIRD ENUMERATIONS.—The United States Biological Survey has recently issued its "Second Annual Report of Bird Counts in the United States, with Discussion of Results."¹ This has to do with the season of 1915. The method of securing data was practically the same as used in 1914, and upon which the "preliminary report" (Bulletin 187, U. S. Dept. Agric.) was based. A circular of detailed instructions was issued to those persons who responded to the general call for volunteer observers. A total of 315 reports for 1915 was received, covering every state in the Union except Utah and Nevada.

In summarizing, emphasis is placed upon the concordance of results of the 1915 enumeration with those of 1914. This would appear to establish an average, in the northeastern United States, of 124 breeding pairs of birds on the average farm of 108 acres. The censuses further indicate that there is an average smaller number of birds per unit of area throughout the region west of the 100th meridian than there is in the eastern states; but no exact numerical statement is yet attempted.

Increase in bird population is observed on those farms or grounds where special pains have been taken to provide increased food, shelter, and protection from enemies.

One feature of the present Report is to be regretted, namely the citation of a census, of dubious authenticity, contributed by some person, not named, from "near Gilroy, Cal." The area treated is comprised in a single farm of 38 acres, and this area is reported as having supported, in 1915, 176 breeding pairs of birds, of 34 species. The species are named, with the result that the reader is invited to believe that the "Western Winter Wren" and "Western Blue Grosbeak" were there breeding side by side, as also the "Allen Hummingbird" and "Pacific Night-hawk"!

These and several other obvious blunders in determination cannot help but bring suspicion upon the whole list; if such carelessness be displayed in reporting species, how can reliance be placed upon the *enumeration*?

It is this thing that we would call attention to, as a danger incurred in the Biological Survey method of gathering data:

¹Bulletin No. 396, United States Department of Agriculture (Contribution from the Bureau of Biological Survey). By Wells W. Cooke. October 23, 1916. Pages 20.

namely, acceptance of data from non-authoritative sources. It goes without saying that the validity of any wide generalization depends upon the soundness of the mass of facts upon which such generalization be based. The testimony of casual field observers must be uncompromisingly *excluded*, until it be known that they are *qualified to furnish authentic information*. This, we realize, will mean a departure from the custom heretofore prevalent in many countries where data is being assembled on bird migration and distribution. But, in the interests of scientific exactitude, some such rule must be followed rigidly, if a high standard of output is to be striven for.

There can be no doubt that extensive accumulations of statistical data bearing on bird population, and its modifying influences, are greatly worth while. Inferences of wide economic importance are sure to come. And of all the institutions now in existence, only a Government Bureau can be expected to handle an undertaking of such magnitude. Our adverse comments, as above, apply only to a detail of method.—
J. GRINNELL.

CONSERVATION OF OUR | WILD BIRDS | METHODS OF ATTRACTING | AND INCREASING THE NUMBERS OF USEFUL | BIRDS AND THE | ESTABLISHMENT OF SANCTUARIES | By | BRADFORD A. SCUDDER | . . . | Issued by the | Massachusetts Fish and Game | Protective Association | 748 Tremont Building | Boston; 71 pp., illustrated. Price 50 cents. Our copy received October 30, 1916.

During recent years there has been a great deal written on the conservation of wild life, but only a small proportion of the books and papers which have appeared have dealt with the subject in a concrete manner and given definite and usable information. The present paper is distinctly practical. It describes in an authoritative yet simple manner some of the means which can be used in Massachusetts for "attracting and increasing the numbers of useful birds".

Following the brief "Introduction" in which are set forth the several ways in which birds are useful to man, the causes of their decrease and the means which have been used to conserve them, the following subjects are considered, a chapter being devoted to each: "Birds that we should encourage to nest about our country homes", "Nesting boxes", "Nesting houses", "Bird baths", "Winter feeding of birds", "Berry and seed bearing trees and shrubs", and "Enemies of

wild birds". Finally there is a "Bibliography of works pertaining to birds and the out-of-doors".

The pamphlet should prove useful to bird lovers in the New England states and has something of value, in suggestions at least, for western students.—TRACY I. STORER.

MINUTES OF COOPER CLUB MEETINGS

NORTHERN DIVISION

NOVEMBER.—The November meeting of the Northern Division was called to order by Vice-president Carriger, at 8 p. m., November 16. As the Secretary was late, business was deferred and Dr. Grinnell was introduced. He gave a most interesting talk on "Birds and Bird People of San Bernardino". The personnel of the new branch of the Cooper Club, which is being organized in San Bernardino, with their varied interests and abilities, was no less interesting than the account of the birds of the cactus and sage-brush belts of Reche Canyon. No doubt the future work of the branch will command much attention.

After some discussion of Dr. Grinnell's paper, the business of the evening was dispatched. The minutes of the October meeting of the Northern Division were read and approved, and those of the Southern Division were read. Mrs. Frances Webster Fish and Mr. Frank J. Steinmetz were elected to membership, and several proposals from the Southern Division were read.

About thirty members and visitors were present, among whom were Messrs. Grinnell, Bryant, Carriger, Evermann, Hansen, Swarth, Wright, Cohen, Dixon, Stone, Ray, Heinemann and Kendall; Mesdames Grinnell, Newhall, Knappen, Ferguson, Swarth, Sweezy, Schlisinger, Parsons, Fish, Allen and Wythe. Miss Ferguson, Mrs. Newhall, Mr. Schlisinger, Mrs. Ray and Mr. Thomas were among the visitors.

Several items of interest with regard to birds were presented: a Florida Gallinule was reported as wintering in Golden Gate Park, by Mr. Hansen; a Townsend Solitaire has been seen repeatedly on the University Campus by Miss Wythe; a beautiful specimen of a Snowy Owl just received at the Museum from Del Norte County, California, was exhibited by Mr. Bryant. Instances of nesting Valley Quail becoming very tame, and also of others nesting in trees, were related and discussed.

The meeting adjourned for informal discussion.—AMELIA S. ALLEN, *Secretary*.