

EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

The depressing news comes that Dr. J. A. Allen is dead. He had reached his 83rd birthday on July 19 last, and he died on August 29, 1921. Dr. Allen was editor of *The Auk* (including its predecessor, the *Bulletin of the Nuttall Ornithological Club*) for a continuous period of 36 years, only relinquishing his activities in this connection some ten years ago. In his editorial capacity he exercised an important influence on the trend of American ornithology; his long series of reviews were critical and at the same time fair and stimulative to author and reader alike. Dr. Allen was a thorough scholar; his research, in ornithology and mammalogy, was of the highest grade; he was modest, lacking entirely thirst for publicity; he was not avid for advancement; he was content with the opportunity afforded him of studying concentratedly in his chosen field of science. The American Museum of Natural History, upon whose staff Dr. Allen labored for 36 years, may well be proud of having had associated with it a man of such virtues and of such eminent scientific attainment.

American ornithology is seriously handicapped by the lack of any thorough, down-to-date bibliography or general index. The provinces of geographical distribution and taxonomy are pretty well looked after, it is true; but there remain such very large subjects as avian behavior, voice, feeding habits, and breeding habits. There has been an enormous amount published on these subjects, but how is a student anxious to contribute seriously along any one of these lines to know what has already appeared in print concerning it? The *Zoological Record* helps, but falls far short of meeting the needs in full measure. Perhaps the best available guides to the literature are comprised in the indexes to the *Auk* and the *Condor*. Prospective authors of articles in any field of ornithology should make full use of these indexes, at least, before launching contributions of their own. It is highly desirable in these days of high printing costs that needless duplication be avoided. Also, one's own conclusions are likely to be modified and bettered in the light of the findings and inferences of other students. And then there is the courtesy to be observed in the way of recognizing the offerings of one's predecessors in any line of enquiry.

The "Cooper Prize in Ornithology" has been established at the University of California for the academic year 1921-22. This consists of \$50.00 in cash to be awarded to the writer of the best essay offered on any

topic concerned with birds. Either undergraduate students or graduate students not more than three years out of the University are eligible to compete. Dissertations, either entire or any part or parts thereof, may be submitted. Three judges will award the prize, one chosen by the Northern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club, one representing the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, and one representing the University Committee on Prizes. Mr. Charles H. Baker, of Oakland, a member of the Club who desires to stimulate scholarly activity in ornithology, is the founder of this prize.

Mr. F. Kermodé, Director of the Provincial Museum, Victoria, British Columbia, in his Report for the year 1920 (page 20), makes the important announcement that the Chinese Starling (*Acridotheres* [or *Aethiopsar*] *crisatellus*) has become well established in the heart of the city of Vancouver, B. C. Nothing is known as to how the colony got started, but at the present time no less than 1200 of the birds roost on ledges on the sides of buildings, faring forth to forage in the fields and gardens of the suburbs. This "starling" is really a species of *Mina*, of whose desirability on economic grounds we have grave doubts. It is frequently brought into North America from the Orient as a cage-bird, though what especial attractiveness it possesses, we fail to see. Control of the introduction of non-native birds as regards both Canada and the United States ought to be more stringent than it is; people should be warned against liberating alien birds, no matter what the species. With the European Starling rapidly spreading in the eastern United States and the Chinese Starling firmly established in the Northwest, the danger that our native bird fauna will suffer through competition and supplantation is increasing rapidly.

Mr. Law advises us that he inadvertently omitted the names of Walter K. Fisher (Northern Division) and Ralph Arnold (Southern Division) from the list of Board of Governors published in *THE CONDOR* for May, 1921, page 101. The name of Fred A. Schneider should not have been included, as he was not a member of the Club for some years subsequent to his presidency.

According to word received from Dr. Chas. W. Richmond, Bent's "Life Histories of North American Gulls and Terns" (*Bulletin* no. 113, U. S. Nat. Mus.) was issued at Washington on August 27. No copies that we know of had, however, reached the Pacific Coast up to September 15.

Mr. John W. Mailliard is at work upon a revised list of the birds of the Lake Tahoe district of east-central California, to be published in an early issue of the CONDOR. Mr. J. R. Pemberton has in preparation an article on the breeding birds of the southern coast district of Texas. Mr. Laurence M. Huey has spent a portion of the summer collecting vertebrates in the White Mountains, Mono County, California, in the interests of Mr. Donald R. Dickey.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

MATHEWS AND IREDALE'S MANUAL OF AUSTRALIAN BIRDS*.—This is to be a well-ordered, down-to-date, and complete systematic compendium of the ornithology of Australia, if standards set in volume I prove to be maintained to the end of volume IV as announced. Efforts have been made to condense a great amount of information into small space, with eminent success it seems to the reviewer. The diagnoses of genera and higher groups are based on the latest researches, the synonymies are adequate, and the descriptions of the species are full, including appropriate consideration of the various plumages, nest, eggs, breeding season, incubation period and distribution. A special feature is the reduction of mention of subspecies to within the text of a paragraph with side-head "Distribution and forms". The bold-face headings have to do with full species only. While 188 full species are thus formally treated in the present volume, nearly 700 subspecies are given the brief form of mention indicated.

The Introduction contains short but suggestive essays on "nomenclature", "classification", and "zoogeographical distribution". A thing emphasized in discussing classification is the short-coming of morphologists generally, in each giving overweight to the structural features with which he happens to be dealing. Thus one man has constructed his system of classification on the skeleton, sometimes upon only one portion of the skeleton; another man has emphasized peculiarities of the circulatory system; another, pterylography; etc. Mathews and Iredale are undoubtedly warranted in their

complaint of one-sidedness on the part of most previous taxonomists. Their own efforts have been towards reducing the evidence from all available sources to a fair level, and building the classification here presented accordingly. The authors resent the casual "excursion", as they call the basis of the average contribution to avian morphology, as compared with the long-continued type of study upon which chiefly will the stable classification of the future depend. This is a point the reviewer is prone to complain of, himself: Many current contributions to ornithology are "theses" from persons who have worked in a given field but two or three years, and who rarely ever again publish upon the same subject.

Several of the colored plates show natal and juvenal plumages and serve to bring out a principle made much of by the authors, namely, that young plumages are to be given great weight in indicating phylogeny in birds—more weight relatively than many adult structures such as have been assigned great importance by most previous taxonomists.

Our comments upon the general text will concern some of the matter relating to American ornithology or American ornithologists, and hence most likely to be of interest to the majority of CONDOR readers.

Under "Fleshy-footed" Shearwater (*Hemipuffinus carneipes*), of which it is stated four subspecies have been indicated, it is further remarked that (p. 29) "This species has been procured off the coast of California, and Loomis's measurements suggest that this is a larger race still." In other words there is a possibility that the Flesh-footed Shearwaters visiting the ocean off California come from some breeding ground as yet unknown, but not necessarily south of the equator at all, as once inferred by Loomis from the facts then known to him. Here is a case where careful subspecific discrimination would be of service.

Under Sooty Albatross (*Phoebastria fusca*) the following statement (p. 49) occurs: "Nichols and Murphy contrasted Mathews's measurements with their own; but we would point out that their method of measuring is unknown to us and we cannot reconcile any of their figures with our own data." The reviewer has not verified this; but can it be that any modern writer on technical ornithology has failed to indicate so clearly just how his measurements were taken that his figures are not intelligible to a worker in another part of the world?

*A Manual of the Birds of Australia by Gregory M. Mathews and Tom Iredale, illustrated with [10] coloured and [36] monochrome plates by Lillian Medland. Volume I [four volumes to complete the work], orders Casuarii to Columbæ. H. F. & G. Witherby, 326 High Holborn, London, [March 9,] 1921. Crown 4to, art canvas, gilt top, pp. xxiv+279, illustrations as above. [Price £3 3s. per volume.]