

EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

The annual roster appearing in this issue shows an active membership in the Cooper Ornithological Club of 816, with honorary 7, making a total of 823 members. This is a three percent increase over last year, and is by that much the largest in the history of the Club.

With this issue of *THE CONDOR* a new department is started, "With the Bird Banders". This department will be conducted under the management of Mr. J. Eugene Law, who is himself vigorously pursuing the fascinating and promising line of inquiry already initiated under the auspices of the United States Biological Survey in many parts of America. We recommend that our readers take particular note of the text on pages 119-120, 140-142, and on outside back cover of this issue.

An appalling condition exists among the water birds at Buena Vista Lake, California, according to word received April 26 from Allan Brooks. Disease, apparently the same that in other years has been more or less destructive to ducks, is now killing waders as well, in countless numbers. Brooks says: "Shore birds are here in swarms, and the sick birds are dying by thousands. Western Sandpipers are here in greatest numbers. With them are many Least and a few Solitary and Spotted sandpipers; also Black-bellied, Semipalmated and Snowy plovers, Dowitchers, Hudsonian Curlew and Marbled Godwit. No dead Curlew or Godwits yet, though they are getting sick. The others are all sick and dying. Sandpipers are the worst sufferers; one dead Western Sandpiper alone per yard of shore is a very moderate estimate. Stilts are nearly wiped out; Avocets almost as bad. The Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley should be called 'Death Valley', as far as birds are concerned. Is there not something that can be done to mitigate this evil, which grows worse each year?" Of course, the cause is correlated with the reclamation of the watered territories, whereby there are left only a few polluted remnants of the former wide areas adapted to certain bird species. These birds, at critical times of the year, are compelled to crowd into such now unfit places, with resulting enormous casualty. No amount of "protection" will do any good, save as involving the institution or preservation of healthful and appropriate territory for these birds. If that is impractical, as some of the opponents of the recently defeated Federal "game refuge bill" averred, then we have got to simply sit by and watch the continued disappearance of certain types in our avifauna.

A rather interesting and suggestive precedent has been set by the Natural History Museum of San Diego, in placing certain of its most valuable specimens in the fire-proof vault of a bank in that city. The specimens in question are of extinct species of birds (Eskimo Curlew and Guadalupe Caracara), therefore irreplaceable. This arrangement was made possible through the enterprise of Mr. J. W. Sefton, Jr., president of the San Diego Society of Natural History.

Our fellow member, Mr. Frank N. Bassett, has started a summer resort at Jonesville, near Butte Meadows, California, with particular attention to providing comfortable headquarters for nature students. This is at an elevation of 5000 feet, on the west slope of the Mount Lassen section of the northern Sierra Nevada. This region has attractions peculiarly its own, to the botanist, to the geologist, and to the ornithologist.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

ELIOT'S BIRDS OF THE PACIFIC COAST.*—The author, Mr. Willard Ayres Eliot, Vice-President of the Oregon Audubon Society, Portland, states in the preface that this little book is "dedicated to the amateur bird students of the West, especially to the teachers and students in our public schools." With this type of audience as the objective clearly understood, many good things can be said of the book, with all sincerity. The volume is so small and light that it goes comfortably in one's coat-pocket. The illustrations are abundant and they are colored; pictures of no less than 118 species are shown, and while of necessity cheaply reproduced, are good enough to help immeasurably in making first acquaintance with the birds in life. The type of the text is clear, on unglazed paper; and typographical errors are gratifyingly few. What is refreshing after certain recent experiences of ours with "popular" books, the English is good. The ornithology is fair,—but here the reviewer, to be consistently honest, must make some comments of an unfavorable kind.

We do not have to read far, skipping here and there, to find slips, inaccuracies, and general statements not justified by detailed facts. Here are some examples: On

**BIRDS OF THE PACIFIC COAST* | Including a brief account [etc., 7 lines] | By Willard Ayres Eliot | With fifty-six color plates by | R. Bruce Horsfall | G. P. Putnam's Sons | The Knickerbocker Press | New York and London | 1923; 16mo, pp. xviii x 211, illus. as above stated. Copy rst seen by the reviewer May 18, 1923.

page 3, second paragraph of the first account in the book, we are told that "the western bluebird is a dark purplish blue instead of the bright blue of the eastern variety." There is much variation in tone of blue in each species; a good deal of this variation is concomitant with the processes of wear and fading. Examination of series of specimens of the two species will show individuals identical in tone of the blue; and the averages, *taking season and climate strictly into account*, are but very slightly different—certainly affording no field character serviceable to the amateur.

The song of the varied thrush (p. 9) is stated to be "clear" and to be given in a "descending scale"—not at all according to the somewhat extended experience of the reviewer. The wren-tit (p. 40) is said to sing *down* the scale, this in spite of the recent full setting forth of the facts by Loye Miller (*Condor*, xxiii, 1921, p. 97).

The California jay belongs to a genus all members of which (p. 113) "are found mostly in mountainous country or in the high plateaus, being frequenters of pine and fir and the oak timber of the southwest"—not at all a proper statement.

The sharp-shinned hawk is declared (p. 152) to be "not common along the Pacific Coast"; and (p. 155) the "Cooper hawk is never a common bird in the West"—of course, altogether misstatements as far as California is concerned (though mayhap applying to the vicinity of Portland, Oregon). And this leads us to wonder if the geographically very limited experience of the author may not in some instances have been expanded to cover the "Pacific Coast"—surely a very unsafe thing to do. Possibly such statements as these last, together with the unjustifiably extensive title of the book, "Birds of the Pacific Coast," were matters of expediency urged upon the author by his publishers in the interests of a widened market. We have heard of such doings before. The whole book breathes of *Oregon*, but Oregon is only one of a series of "Pacific Coast" states (in the broad sense evidently intended), of vastly diversified avifauna.

There is just one more point to select for mention; and this did get some ways under the reviewer's skin! On page 124, the pileated woodpecker is stated to have "become one of the rarer species, for its large size and handsome appearance have been its undoing, the so-called scientist, the collector and the idle gunner having shot it

out. . . .". Why *will* Audubon people persist in taking flings at collectors! Why should the Audubon exponent be so prone to turn and bite the hand that feeds it! There is little doubt that "so-called scientists" and "collectors" have put on record at least 90 percent of the reliable ornithological knowledge extant today. We observe that the present book is chiefly a compilation from a selection of authorities (named in the preface)—who would not have been authorities without the basic process of collecting having been long and arduously carried on. The reviewer is himself a "so-called scientist" and a "collector", both; he is thankful for his past experience as a collector; but he does not relish being classed with the "idle gunner", and especially being called to account as a co-factor in the extermination of any species of bird. (See *Science*, n. s., LVI, Dec. 15, 1922, pp. 671-676.) Once more, upon what ethical basis are Audubon folks justified in going out of their way to stigmatize us "so-called scientists" and "collectors" before the rising generation, as if we were moral outcasts, only to be condemned and shunned?

Well, well; we hadn't intended going quite so far! Please, reader, go back and scan the first paragraph of this review, and leave these columns with the more favorable impression which Elliot's "Birds of the Pacific Coast" really deserves.—J. GRINNELL, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, May 27, 1923.*

MINUTES OF COOPER CLUB MEETINGS

MARCH.—The regular meeting of the Cooper Ornithological Club, Northern Division, was held at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology on March 22, 1923, at 8 P. M. President Cooper was in the chair and the following members were present: Misses Beaman, Burk, Clough, Flinn, Pringle, and Thomson; Mesdames Allen, Bogle, Cantelow, Frederick, Grinnell, Reygadas, and Thomas; Major Brooks, Messrs. Cantelow, Dixon, Evermann, Gignoux, Grinnell, Malliard, Strong, Swarth, Thomas; visitors were Mrs. Evermann, Mrs. Thomson, and Mr. Taylor.

The minutes of the February meeting were read and approved and the following names were presented: Mr. Ralph Ellis and Mr. Ralph Ellis, Jr., 2421 Ridge Road, Berkeley, California, by Mr. H. S. Swarth, and Mr. Ralph W. Chaney, 1232 Carlotta St., Berkeley, by Mr. Joseph Grinnell.