

magazines of the world for the publication of new life-history materials, and its photographic illustrations are seldom excelled. Now we have announcement of a projected work of superlative magnitude, to be entitled "Cayley's Birds of Australia, their Habits, Nests and Eggs". The publishers are Angus and Robertson, of Sydney. The work will be illustrated by Mr. Neville W. Cayley, a talented artist; and the text will be furnished by many authorities in the different portions of the field covered, among whom are A. J. Campbell, A. G. Campbell, C. L. Barrett (editor), Edwin Ashby, W. B. Alexander, and S. A. White. Apparently, this will be a thoroughgoing, joint product bringing the subject of Australian ornithology right down to date in practically complete form.

Mr. H. Hedley Mitchell, of the Normal School at Regina, Saskatchewan, has compiled a very creditable list of the birds of that Province. The Provincial Government plans to publish this shortly in a form to be useful to the public in general and to school people in particular. The appearance of this contribution, which we have examined in manuscript, will, we feel sure mark a distinct advance in the development of the ornithology of the central Canadian provinces.

Dr. Casey A. Wood is spending some months in the Fiji Islands where he is making observations upon the bird-life, and securing drawings and specimens of the rarer species.

We observe with interest a note appended to a recent publication of the United States Department of Agriculture. After the usual announcement of the place of sale and the cost, there is added, "purchaser agrees not to re-sell or distribute this copy for profit". Presumably this is an outcome of a growing feeling of resentment on the part of the interested public at the way in which certain important government publications have at once become "out of print", to re-appear in the hands of the book dealers at greatly inflated prices. Whether the "profiteers" aimed at will feel themselves bound by any such "agreement" is a question, but at any rate it is a satisfaction to know that this particular problem is recognized by those in authority and that steps are being taken towards a solution. The Federal Government is performing an extremely useful function in supplying authoritative information, on ornithological subjects as well as on many others, at minimum cost, and it is a service that we believe receives general and deep appreciation. If some method can be devised

whereby speculators can be discouraged from grasping the opportunity so easy to be taken advantage of, the general public will benefit.

Among Cooper Club members who participated in the programs of the Pacific Division of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Los Angeles, September 17 to 19, were the following: Mr. Donald R. Dickey, on the birds of Laysan Island (illustrated by motion pictures); Dr. Walter P. Taylor, on the present status of the Band-tailed Pigeon, and on the conservation of upland game birds in Washington; Mr. E. C. Jaeger, on the importance of correct geographical place names; Dr. Joseph Grinnell, on the bird-life of Death Valley, and on geography and evolution; Dr. Barton W. Evermann, on the sea environment of natural resources contrasted with that on the land in relation to conservation; Mr. J. Eugene Law, on the geologic history of the Fox Sparrows; Dr. David Starr Jordan, on barriers in relation to species-forming.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

GRISCOM ON *DENDRAGAPUS**.—Of the four birds described in this paper, one is a supposedly new form of sooty grouse, *Dendragapus obscurus munroi*, from the Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia. The main point of general interest in this description is the claim that there are in the genus *Dendragapus* two molts each year. Aside from the regular annual molt, Griscom asserts and re-asserts that there is in the male a "prenuptial" molt, which involves the plumage of "head, neck, chin and throat, and to a slight extent the upper back," and that in the female it is even more extensive. This molt, it is stated, is accomplished in the male in May or early June. In the female of *munroi* it takes place "anywhere between early April and the middle of June."

The material used as the basis for the study consisted of twenty-nine skins of "*munroi*," from the Queen Charlotte Islands, and a total of just fifteen skins of "*fuliginosus*" from elsewhere. Griscom proceeds at the outset to preach the exercise of care in systematic work in determining the effects of molt and wear. In other words, he 'talks down' to other systematic workers, more particularly to Mr. Harry

*Descriptions of Apparently New Birds from North America and the West Indies, by Ludlow Griscom: American Museum Novitates, Number 71, April 30, 1923, pp. 1-8.

S. Swarth (describer of *Dendragapus obscurus sitkensis*, which is here considered unworthy of mention in the comparison), as if he were instructing an Audubon class! Space is taken up with the A B C of systematic ornithology, and this in a paper in a supposedly technical series, none other than the "Novitates" series of the American Museum of Natural History. Editorial oversight seems to have been altogether lacking in this case.

It is implied very plainly that Mr. Swarth committed a blunder in naming *sitkensis*, by reason of his failure to recognize the existence of a prenuptial molt. Now, I have personally studied all of the material worked over by Mr. Swarth and listed by him in his paper describing *sitkensis*; this material, be it noted, is considerably greater in amount than that listed as the basis of Griscom's studies. Some dates for adult specimens are: April 6, 13, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29; May 3, 4, 11, 24, 28; June 2, 19. Briefly, and to the point, I find no evidence whatsoever of *any prenuptial molt*! Upon scrutinizing Griscom's paper I fail to find in it any definite evidence given for predicating such a molt. He speaks only of specimens in plumage just before or just following said "molt"!

I believe Griscom could have avoided the commission of error, or at least better assured himself of the facts in the case, if he had simply taken the pains to assemble more material; this he could have done by seeking help, which would have been freely granted, from other institutions. The modern method precludes reliance, where important critical points are involved, upon the material solely in one museum.

Since writing the foregoing I have talked with Major Allan Brooks, who has had an enviably long field experience with northwestern birds. He states it as his belief that there is no such thing as a prenuptial molt in *Dendragapus*, save for the usual sporadic replacement of feathers at any time in the year when feathers have been lost through violence. He says, furthermore, that he believes the name *munroi* to be a pure synonym of *sitkensis*—in which belief I concur.

Major Brooks permits me to quote some interesting comments of his in this regard. "J. H. Fleming described the subspecies in manuscript about 1915, but considerably refrained from publishing his description, as I asked him to hold it, first, until Swarth, who already had noted the

difference, had decided what he was going to do with it; and second, until birds from the mainland had been procured. Fleming worked from some twelve skins borrowed from my collection and taken by C. deB. Green. I have had in my collection some 45 specimens of *Dendragapus* from the Queen Charlotte Islands, and my differentiation of them would be on exactly the same character as Swarth bases his name *sitkensis*, namely, the very red coloration of the female. This series shows considerable variation (individual) in both male and female, but the female is always notably red. The male is not conspicuously darker, if darker at all, than mainland males."

It is too bad to have to say un-nice things; but, in the interest of what, if pursued seriously and discerningly, is a perfectly good science, some one has to sacrifice himself once in a while—and I decided to assume the unpleasant function of adverse critic in this case.—J. GRINNELL, *Berkeley, California, June 26, 1923.*

MINUTES OF COOPER CLUB MEETINGS

NORTHERN DIVISION

MAY.—The regular meeting of the Cooper Ornithological Club, Northern Division, was held at the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology on May 24, 1923, at 8:00 P. M. President Cooper was in the chair and the following members were present: Miss Flinn, Mesdames Allen, Bogle, Cantelow, Grinnell, Kelly, Mead, Mexia, Nienburg; Messrs. Clabaugh, Cantelow, Cooper, Dixon, Evermann, Gignoux, Grinnell, Lastreto, McLeod, Storer, and Swarth; visitors were Mrs. Hull and Mr. Simpson.

March minutes were read and approved. As the April meeting took the form of a field trip to Golden Gate Park, followed by a lecture by Dr. H. C. Bryant, given at the California Academy of Sciences, no business meeting was held at that time. Minutes of the Southern Division meeting in March were also read. Three applications were presented: Winthrop Sprague Brooks, Boston Society of Natural History, 234 Berkeley St., Boston, Mass., by Joseph Dixon; Mrs. Effie C. Cohn, Key Route Inn, Oakland, Calif., by Mr. Claude Gignoux; and Mr. Charles Dickens, Key Route Inn, Oakland, also by Mr. Claude Gignoux.

Arrangements were made for a gathering of those interested to be held at the museum on Monday, May 28, at 8:00 P. M., to