

EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

Through the thoughtful interest of Mr. Bradshaw H. Swales, THE CONDOR is able to publish the accompanying two photographs, taken forty years ago in the office of the Division of Birds in the South Tower of the old Smithsonian Building in Washington, D. C. Aside from the personal interest attaching to these portraits of Stejneger and Ridgway when comparatively young men, there is the historical interest in the setting. For many years, 1868 to 1885 about, this was the most active center for ornithology in North America. It was here that most of Baird, Brewer and Ridgway's "North American Birds" was written, and Stejneger's volume on "Birds" in the Standard Natural History series, besides an enormous mass of lesser contributions.

Contributors of articles or notes to THE CONDOR ought to know some of the conditions that confront the Editor. When matter of an urgent nature is intended

for any given issue, the manuscript must be in the hands of the Editor not later than the first of the month preceding the month in which the issue in question is to appear. The Editor, or his associate, is responsible for the reading of three proofs on the entire contents of each issue. This means the allowance of adequate time for transmittal of materials back and forth between the Editor and the printer; and there is the further factor that manuscript and proofs cannot be given attention in the Editorial Office save as time for it does not conflict with other duties which necessarily take precedence. Then, too, experience shows that at least two weeks must be allotted for the shipment to our Business Managers and the mailing of an edition. The work on an issue that is to be mailed on, say, September 15, must be started on August 1. And we yearn for punctuality as regards date of publication. We invite our contributors to take these conditions into account.



Fig. 50. LEONHARD STEJNEGER WHEN 33 YEARS OLD; PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN SOUTH TOWER OF SMITHSONIAN BUILDING IN AUGUST, 1884.

What is the most written-about bird in California? This query has doubtless arisen from time to time in the minds of more than one student of California birds. It happens that there is now available some basis for reply, in that the Editor of THE CONDOR has recently been engaged in indexing his bibliography of California ornithology. The following appear to be the ten most celebrated birds in California, as judged by the number of times each name has appeared in the titles of published articles: (1) Band-tailed Pigeon; (2) California Condor; (3) Road-runner; (4) Meadowlark; (5) Valley Quail; (6) California Woodpecker; (7) English Sparrow; (8) Anna Hummingbird; (9) Wood Duck; (10) Brewer Blackbird. The order is that of frequency of mention. This order of popularity or notoriety is obviously based on such features as conspicuousness, importance from the standpoint of the sportsman (especially where there has been change in status), economic bearing otherwise, and novelty of appearance or habits.

An article the portent of which we strongly commend, appeared in the July, 1924, *Ibis* under the title "The Affinities of Some Nearctic and Palearctic Ducks." The author, Allan Brooks, it seems to us has made his case perfectly clear, which is as follows: the Redhead and the Old World Pochard are absolutely distinct, specifically, and are not two subspecies of one holarctic species, as has lately been declared with much show of finality. Indeed, it would be quite as reasonable to unite the Pochard with the Canvas-back. This statement the author backs up by a tabular analysis of characters and a set of text figures: the facts are made available to those who read. A coincident conclusion is that there is no ground whatsoever for placing the Canvas-back in a separate genus from the Redhead. In this same article facts are cited which argue against the allocation properly of the American Green-winged Teal and the European Teal as subspecies of one species. There are perfectly definite qualitative characters which separate the two—



Fig. 51. ROBERT RIDGWAY WHEN 34 YEARS OLD; PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN IN SOUTH TOWER OF SMITHSONIAN BUILDING IN AUGUST, 1884.

as distinct species. It is reassuring thus to find well-supported opposition to the present unfortunate tendency to reduce species which differ in relatively slight degree, but constantly, from one another, to subspecies of single species.

There has just appeared in the "Bulletin" series of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard College (vol. LXVI, pp. 1-209), Part I of "The Birds of the Lake Umbagog Region of Maine," by William Brewster. We are informed by Dr. Thomas Barbour that the manuscript for this posthumous contribution was left by its author in practically complete form—"almost absolutely ready for publication with hardly a change of a word or a comma." To those who were acquainted with the scholarly and painstaking work of William Brewster, this information comes as merely a corroboration of what we well knew to be his method. He did thoroughly whatever task he set for himself. It has long been known that Brewster's personal field interest centered for many years in the Lake Umbagog region of Maine, and that he was working toward a comprehensive account of the birds of that Boreal locality. There will be two further "parts" to complete his entire record. Brewster's own accurate observations are given in narrative form, in the excellent literary style for which his writings always were noted. Perusal of the accounts of species in Part I discloses a great deal of fact and philosophy new to our previous experience. In other words, we have here a contribution of real and lasting value. The only criticism that occurs to us is that the nomenclature has been "modernized" from the form in which doubtless it was left by Brewster. Brewster was himself conservative. He certainly would content himself, were he alive today, with the names as they stand on the A. O. U. Check-list. We hardly think he would subscribe, for instance, to "*Casmerodius alba egretta*" for the American Egret. The title page of the present "part" does not, unfortunately, give any indication as to who is responsible for such editorial emendations as the one just cited.

In the Saturday Evening Post of June 14, 1924, page 29, some one by the name of Kenneth L. Roberts includes in his vivacious and vivid word picture of the Pima desert of Arizona the following phrase: "gawky, long-necked, long-tailed black-and-white birds known as road runners

dash madly ahead of the traveler, or plunge hysterically from one side of the road to the other . . .". We wonder to what extent readers of THE CONDOR will approve of this characterization of the Road-runner. If the above excerpt is a fair sample of the whole article with respect to accuracy of fact, we once more "deplore" the low standard of "informational" literature offered to, and accepted by, the public.

COMMUNICATIONS

CROW-SHOOTING CONTESTS

Editor THE CONDOR:

As an old member of the Cooper Ornithological Club and an earnest and practical bird conservationist, may I enter a vigorous protest and dissent to the resolution passed at the meeting of the Northern Division on March 27 condemning the proposed campaign against Crows and other vermin now being instituted by the Du Pont Powder Company? While recognizing that the system advocated by that Company is not ideal, and that it is open to several points of objection, still it is at present the only means we have of combating the increasing menace of the Crow.

The antagonists of the scheme base their main objection on the supposed lawlessness of those taking part in the destruction of Crows during the closed season, and also they are averse to the "extermination" of the Crow. As Californians you probably know better than I do what the moral attributes and law-abiding capacity of your countrymen are, and to what extent your game wardens are capable of coping with the proposed situation; but in British Columbia where the system of organized shoots in the closed season directed against Crows and other vermin has been in practice for several years, no violations of the game laws have been reported, nor am I aware of a single case where game has been shot by any member of these contests during the closed season.

That there is the smallest possibility of the extermination of the Crow or of any species of mammal or bird against which the campaign is directed is too absurd to be discussed seriously. The utmost we can hope for is to keep their numbers down to a considerable extent.

Your resolution condemns the system for the whole continent, not as applied to your State alone. While California as a