

## EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

During the coming summer there is to be inaugurated a school of "Field Natural History" in Yosemite National Park. Instruction is planned primarily for the training of nature study teachers, those who are called upon to act as leaders of Boy Scouts or Campfire Girls, or as nature guides at summer camps. Emphasis will thus be placed upon out-of-door knowledge of living things. The new Yosemite Museum, affording exceptional facilities for the work, will serve as headquarters. Dr. Harold C. Bryant will be in charge, and the seven or eight individuals serving as nature guides in Yosemite will act as instructors. During this first year the number of those who can be received in the school will necessarily be limited. Anyone interested in obtaining detailed information may apply to the Park Naturalist, Yosemite National Park.

In the death of John Van Denburgh, on October 23, 1924, the general field of science lost a worthy exponent and the Cooper Ornithological Club lost a member of long standing and loyal influence. In 1898 and 1899, Van Denburgh published articles on birds of various parts of California, which remain to this day models of accuracy and sources of important distributional and biographical data. His attention for many years subsequently was absorbed in the study of herpetology, in which subject he contributed with great authority. Of late years his interest in birds had returned, as witness several articles in recent volumes of *THE CONDOR*, the last of which appeared in the March issue of last year.

We learn through Professor Junius Henderson, Curator of the Museum of the University of Colorado, that two important collections of bird skins have been received by that institution during the past year. Dr. Leonard R. Freeman, of Denver, presented his entire collection, consisting of 645 skins taken by him in the Ohio Valley from 1875 to 1880. This accession proved to be in excellent condition and to be especially rich in plumage phases of the warblers. Dr. W. H. Bergtold donated his collection of 576 skins and many sets of eggs, taken chiefly in the Rocky Mountain region and New York. These two accessions add many species new to the University of Colorado collec-

tions, and there are also some record specimens of importance.

### COMMUNICATION

#### ANENT THE CROW

Editor *THE CONDOR*:

While deploring the introduction of controversial matter into the pages of our ornithological magazines, I would like to take some exception to the address of Dr. Witmer Stone which you extoll on page 44 of the January *CONDOR*. The sentiments you quote are sentiments only, and especially in regard to "the much maligned Crow" are obviously biased by the author's regard for that bird. No notice is taken of any recent publications dealing with the increasing menace of the Crow; on the contrary, the definite statement is made that "he is doing no more harm today than he did fifty years ago, if as much."

It is exactly on account of the prodigious increase of the Crow, particularly in the West, an increase that threatens the existence not only of our game-birds and waterfowl but also of the entire bird population of regions affected by agriculture, that true conservationists who have really studied the question are advocating the absolute outlawing of the black villain. Besides the evidence of my own observations extending over a large portion of the West and covering a period of thirty-eight years, all observers whom I meet and others who voluntarily write to me are unanimous as to this increase which probably amounts to thirty-fold in the last twenty years. A sample letter dated September 24, 1924, from a veteran naturalist, Mr. Wm. B. Mershon, whose last book you review on the page preceding your review of Dr. Stone's brochure, is as follows:

"I have just read what you have to say about crows in the *CONDOR* in the September-October issue just at hand, and this is simply to let you know that I agree with everything you say.

"I have a ranch up in Saskatchewan, about twenty-five miles northeast of Moose Jaw. I began going into that country in 1903. The crows were few then. I rarely noticed them. Of late they have been there in droves, and there is no question but that they destroy the eggs of the ducks. Grouse have become very scarce

and for two years now our local duck crop has been very much lessened. How much the crows have had to do with it, I don't know, but the crow is a pest and he ought to be kept down, and the only way to do it is to make him an outlaw."

It is to be regretted that the editors of our two foremost magazines of technical ornithology, to whom the public should confidently look for guidance, should be so swayed by misdirected sentiment as to deprecate the splendid work being done under the Economic Investigations Department of the Bureau of Biological Survey. The reading of the 1924 Report of the Chief of this Bureau affords a fine stimulus after the depression induced by the perusal of the Little Bedtime Stories of some of our ornithological leaders, dealing for the most part with that figmental phantasy, the "Balance of Nature". What this "balance" really amounts to can only be learned by a sojourn in an absolute wilderness unaffected by the influence of man; then one realizes what a scarcity of bird-life really is.

It is difficult to write with moderation of the activities of the lovers of predatory animals when one of one's closest friends faces absolute ruin, together with other sheep-ranchers, after years of effort, all on account of the estimable coyote; or when some of our most interesting birds such as the Sandhill Crane and Long-billed Curlew (which are never molested by man here) are on the very verge of extermination throughout the region, altogether due to coyotes and crows.

What you should do, my dear Grinnell, is to change your rapid peering habit of a Gnatcatcher to the careful intensive glare of a Canyon Wren into dark places,—and get a white patch on your throat to help you!—ALLAN BROOKS, *Okanagan Landing, British Columbia, January 26, 1925.*

#### PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

**BRITISH WADERS.** Illustrated in Water-Colour with Descriptive Notes. By E. C. ARNOLD. Demy 4to, pp. viii + 102, 51 colored plates; Cambridge University Press. Price £3-10s. net. (Limited edition of 50 signed and numbered copies on hand-made paper, of which 45 copies are for sale, £7-7s. net.)

The present volume is not a treatise on British Waders. It is primarily a collection of personal observations and is a record of remarkable achievement. Our author has remarks to make on 53 species of Limicolae, of which he has actually

collected no less than 29 and has narrowly missed securing a good many more. Many of his waders are great rarities on the British list and include the Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*) and the American Pectoral Sandpiper (*Pisobia maculata*).

The usual detailed plumage descriptions are omitted, as the author considers them superfluous in a book of this kind, with so many excellent scientific manuals already available. The total length of each bird is given in the text. It seems a pity, however, that there is no index.

"Arnold's luck" is a phrase that I have several times heard in English bird circles, as though he were the most fortunate collector in the country. This has always struck me as being something of an injustice; for one only has to take a ramble with the author to realize that he deserves everything he gets. He knows his birds intimately; he is remarkably observant, highly appreciative of minute color differences, and forever on the watch for a strange movement, flight or note, and tireless in the pursuit of the unusual when he has found it. It is these things that make the successful collector, and not the luck that is so easily ascribed to him. A perusal of the pages is an incentive to improve one's own methods.

The greatest value in these notes lies in the emphasis laid on the salient features to be noticed in the field. Many of the species dealt with are practically cosmopolitan and turn up on both sides of the Atlantic from time to time. The notes, written as they are by an exceptionally able observer, therefore have considerable interest for those of us on this side who are also wader enthusiasts. There must be a good number of collectors even on this home continent of the Buff-breast who are still awaiting the first chance of a capture.

Many questions of interest to field workers are discussed. Among them may be mentioned the one most repeatedly referred to, When should a sight record be accepted and when should it not? As our author all too truly remarks, sight records are received with as much skepticism by the most ardent protectionists as by the most rabid collectors. The query would appear to be at least partially answered by such episodes as the author's first capture of a "Killdeer". He relates the incident in the following words. "A bird, obviously a Plover of sorts, rose suddenly from the grass with a slow flight that was new to me. It had a bright chestnut rump