

EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

The Sixth Annual Meeting of the Cooper Ornithological Club will be held in the San Francisco Bay region, May 15-17, 1931. Sessions for the presentation of papers will be held at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco and on the campus of the University of California at Berkeley. President L. H. Miller of the Board of Governors has appointed the following local committee to handle arrangements for the meeting: general chairman, Alden H. Miller; program, J. Grinnell; hospitality, Mrs. A. S. Allen; publicity, H. S. Swarth; meeting places, J. M. Linsdale; finance, T. I. Storer. The tentative program includes motion pictures of processes in bird physiology and of life history studies on rare western birds, the annual dinner, a social evening during which opportunity will be given to see the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology in its new location in the recently completed Life Sciences Building at Berkeley, and a Sunday morning trip by automobile to some point in the Bay region, probably in the Napa Valley, near St. Helena. Further details will be announced in the March issue of the Condor. The Tenth Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors will be held in connection with the annual meeting of the Club.

The magpies (both yellow-billed and black-billed) have for several years formed the subject of a special natural history study by Jean M. Linsdale. Although many facts are known about these common birds, great gaps remain in the existing knowledge of them. Doubtless the notebooks of many Cooper Club members contain facts that would help to fill these gaps. Dr. Linsdale, who should be addressed at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley, will appreciate receiving records of first-hand observations of these birds, either regarding places of occurrence or concerning any phase of life history or behavior.

A comprehensive study of the Baird Sparrow has been undertaken by Mr. B. W. Cartwright and associates, who will appreciate such information concerning this species as breeding data, dates of migration, and data from labels of speci-

mens. Facts regarding the southern limits of the winter range are also needed. Communications along these lines should be addressed to B. W. Cartwright, 392 Woodlawn St., Deer Lodge, Winnipeg, Canada.

Dr. A. K. Fisher, Senior Biologist, United States Bureau of Biological Survey, makes some forceful comments concerning the predatory bird problem in a recent issue of *Fins, Feathers and Fur* (no. 92, December, 1930, p. 13). Under the title "Reviewing House Cats and Birds of Prey", he says, among other things: "It readily can be understood that an individual will become prejudiced against a Cooper hawk or a sharp-shinned hawk that molests his chickens or birds, but how anyone with even a vestige of open mind can believe that a marked general diminution in the abundance of bird life is due to inroads of natural enemies is beyond normal comprehension. . . . It is hard to understand the mental complex of those professing faith, and who approach the Infinite with full adulation, attempting, without a blush, to rearrange in Nature to suit their selfish wishes those things which have worked in harmony for millions of years. . . . Sportsmen and naturalists agree that cats will eat mice, but not if birds are available for food. . . . If [non-native] cats and rats could be eliminated other natural enemies of birds need hardly be considered." These statements of Dr. Fisher's include the essential definition of the "balance of nature" as many naturalists use that phrase. And of course it applies far and wide as well as in connection with the influence of birds of prey on other birds.

Dr. Adolphus L. Heermann, writing in 1854 (*Pac. R. R. Repts.*, vol. 10, 1859, *Zool.*, no. 2, p. 34), says of the Barn Owl: "At one time [when he first visited Sacramento, in 1849] they frequented the old hollow trees of Sacramento City, but have gradually disappeared, as their old haunts have been destroyed to make way for the *march of improvement and civilization.*" Italics ours, to show how the naturalist's concern of today at the effects of human activities upon wild animal life but repeats that of the naturalist of 65 years ago; only the *rate* of disappearance in later years seems ever to increase.—J.G.

Referring to the Mockingbird, we see a great deal written concerning that bird's "powers of mimicry." We just wonder if there be in that species, or any other bird, the exercise of any real process of imitation. In this connection, see the thoughtful article of J. Paul Visscher, in the *Wilson Bulletin*, vol. 40, December, 1928, pp. 209-216.

Dr. Alden H. Miller has undertaken a systematic revision of the Juncos and invites assistance in the way of loans of specimens of critical importance or of information in any way bearing on this problem. His revision of the North American Shrikes is now completed and the manuscript is in press. Dr. Miller may be addressed at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley.

An excellent handbook of "The Birds of Golden Gate Park, San Francisco" has just appeared (November 22, 1930) under the authorship of Mr. Joseph Mailliard and under the auspices of the California Academy of Sciences. It is of 84 pages, of crown octavo size, with flexible board covers, and sells for 75 cents. There are 94 simple but quite satisfactory line drawings of as many kinds of birds, and each of these is accompanied by a brief description and a paragraph on the opposite page drawn up to aid identification in the field. The combination of concise description, effective illustration and convenient size for pocket use, would appear to insure wide use of this booklet on the part of the amateur nature-seeking public. And the extensive Golden Gate Park, with its abundant bird-life, located within a large city, provides just such a public in increasingly large measure.—J.G.

Western ornithologists should be interested in a study that has been inaugurated covering the Gambel Quail from about the same standpoint as Stoddard's investigations on the southeastern Bob-white. In response to the convincing arguments of Mr. Aldo Leopold (a Cooper Club member), the "Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers Institute" has established four "Game Bird Fellowships," awarded, respectively, to the universities of Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Arizona. Birds that are being studied are the Ring-necked Pheasant, Hungarian Partridge, Ruffed Grouse and Gambel

Quail. The "Institute" supplies the financial backing, the several universities exercise general supervision over their parts of the undertaking, and the United States Bureau of Biological Survey cooperates in an advisory capacity, and in other helpful ways. On July 1, 1930, the Gambel Quail investigation was put in charge of Mr. David M. Gorsuch, who in years past has acted as field assistant in Biological Survey investigations and for the California Academy of Sciences. Headquarters are established near Tucson, Arizona, at the Florida Ranger Station, on the western slope of the Santa Rita Mountains, where the extensive Santa Rita Range Reserve offers various advantageous features for such a study. The Gambel Quail is abundant there, and under relatively primitive conditions, while the Scaled Quail and Mearns Quail also occur, at the margins of their habitats, and formerly the Masked Bob-white was found in the same region. The hope of the sponsors of these fellowships is, of course, for better shooting as a result; but even though we may not all sympathize with this objective the studies are not to be decried on that account. In fact, if wild birds are to be shot for sport at all it would seem not only justifiable but the obvious thing to do, to subject each game species to such an investigation as would tell us exactly what we were doing in our shooting.—H.S.S.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

A CENSUS OF BRITISH HERONRIES.—What gains can be made for ornithology by the distillation of "common knowledge?" We might divide scholars into two classes, the Classical or Faustian, delving into secrets that no man knows, and a more modern type who is expert to extract the knowledge of the inarticulate herd. For the first his secluded tower and the sign of the macrocosm, if he can find it. For the second the statistical laboratory, the questionnaire, and the return post-card. How much safer the latter's work would be if we all leaned more to the side of ignorance and less toward "knowing so many things that ain't so"!

¹"Report on the 'British Birds' Census of Heronries, 1928." By E. M. Nicholson. London, H. F. and G. Witherby. Reprinted from "British Birds", xxii, 11, April 1, 1929, pp. 270-372. Post 8vo. Paper.