

## EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

The new, Fourth Edition of the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American Birds was off the press on October 1. After an interval of twenty-one years since the Third Edition appeared, we again have a down-to-date distributional summary of American ornithology. In all, 1420 species and subspecies are listed in regular standing, and besides these there is a hypothetical list, a list of changes, additions and eliminations in comparison with the preceding edition, and an extensive list of fossil species. An entirely new sequence is followed, and indeed the new Check-list throughout is essentially a different work from any of the preceding editions. Copies, cloth-bound, 526 pages, may be obtained from the A. O. U. Treasurer, Mr. W. L. McAtee, Cherryvale, Virginia; price \$4.00, which covers bare cost of printing and binding. Every Cooper Club member should have a copy of this new Check-list at his immediate command; and each really active bird student should own *two* copies, one to keep as a library copy, the other to use as a working copy --to interline, add to, correct and generally keep down to date during the interval until the next, *fifth* edition appears, whether this be ten or twenty years hence.

To Florence Merriam Bailey, Honorary Member of the Cooper Ornithological Club and Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union, has come a crowning recognition. By unanimous action of the Council of the A. O. U. at its meeting at Detroit on October 19, 1931, Mrs. Bailey was awarded the Brewster Medal as the author of the most important work relating to the birds of the Western Hemisphere published during the preceding six years. This medal is awarded biennially, and the basis of the award in the present instance was Mrs. Bailey's "Birds of New Mexico". Especially inasmuch as this work was a Western undertaking, fellow Cooper Club members will join heartily in congratulating the author upon the distinction she and her work have won.

Early in August the National Association of Audubon Societies issued a call for a Nation-wide closed period or moratorium, on the shooting of waterfowl during the entire season 1931-32. The reason for this proposed action was the exceedingly good one that prolonged drouth conditions in the northwestern United States and western Canada during the preceding breeding season had seriously interfered with the reproduction of wild ducks and geese of many kinds. As it now happens this failure of the "crop" is followed by conditions of extreme water-shortage on the wintering grounds of the birds, due to lack of rainfall. If shooting were to be carried on as usual on the greatly reduced wintering grounds, the breeding stock of some of the rarer species, for the following year, would be so depleted that it would likely never recover. The Audubon Societies' proposal was that the United States Department of Agriculture exercise the power with which it is vested under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in order to bring about the needed closed season of 1931-32. This proposal was backed not only by very many ornithologists, and organizations devoted to bird study including the Cooper Club (see p. 261), but it was approved by certain true sportsmen who are aware of the seriousness of the situation. Unfortunately the eastern authorities saw fit to recommend, not complete closing of the season, but a reduction of the season to one month. We in the West know that this will simply mean concentration of the hunting in the small remaining territory mostly taken up by gun-clubs, many of them "commercial" ones, with very little real respite in sight for the ducks. This one-month open season was confirmed by Executive proclamation and is now in effect—in California, November 16 to December 15, inclusive.—J.G.

By authority of the Division of Fish and Game the Western Bird-banding Association desires to make the following announcements to California banders. As in the past, permits are to be issued by the Association, subject to the approval of the Division, but the issuing power,

instead of being personally vested in the recent president, Mr. Robertson, at Buena Park, is now to be exercised by the Association corporately from its Berkeley offices in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, whence application forms may be obtained. Three changes in the nature of the permit will be made on December 31, 1931. First, the old letter-size sheet will be replaced by a small printed card, much like the state and federal scientific collecting permits. Second, permits will cease to expire automatically at the end of the current year, but remain valid as long as no reason for revoke arises. Third, summarized returns, to be submitted to the W.B.B.A. on the regular schedule forms provided for the purpose, become official requirements, on a par with Federal returns, and failure to make such returns on or about the end of each calendar year, or to note on the same forms the reason for any temporary suspension of activities, results in the automatic cancellation of the permit. The latter provision, which lays the foundation for a great state collection of banding records, under the custodianship of the W.B.B.A., was believed to be of the greatest value in itself, and at the same time to make possible the convenience of unlimited permits, by forming a check on the considerable class of permittees whose activities are short-lived, but whose forgotten permits should not, from the point of view of the law-enforcement branch or those responsible for the proper conduct of banding, be scattered at large about the state.—WESTERN BIRD-BANDING ASSOCIATION.

## CURRENT DISCUSSION

### "PESTS" AND AGRICULTURE

In the May issue of *The Condor*, there appeared an article by Dr. Linsdale giving some rather startling facts concerning the use of poisons in destroying so-called pests. To those of us who have kept in touch with this situation during the past several years, it would now appear certain that much of California's wild life is doomed to early extinction from this cause. Whether or not our native fauna is of any value to this very materialistic age may be a debatable question. Certainly it is one that the public must soon settle, if indeed, it has not already been settled by indifference.

There is one angle of this matter of poisoning which has not received much attention in the press but which is the cause of considerable worry to the farming interests of this State. Pest destruction has or should have as its object the creating of conditions making possible the production of more crops usable as human food or as articles for sale or barter, with other countries. At the present time, however, the enormous expense of pest destruction cannot be justified from that standpoint. The words "surplus" and "overproduction" have been heard on every hand during the past few crop seasons and we have been given to understand that the present crisis in agriculture is due to a failure of the domestic and foreign markets to consume all of the farm products which have been harvested. Last year the Federal Farm Board was reported to have expended a sum in excess of one hundred million dollars for the purchase of surplus wheat. A few weeks ago press dispatches announced that this same agency had advised cotton growers to plow up a large part of the present cotton crop or else be prepared to accept ruinous prices if the entire acreage was allowed to mature. In the autumn of 1930 several thousand carloads of California grapes for which no market could be found were purchased by this same Federal agency or one of the Boards created by it. A vast amount of these grapes was allowed to hang on the vines throughout the entire fall and winter and to become the breeding place for sufficient insects and fungous diseases to keep the pest-destroying squads busy for many months. Numerous other examples of this sort could be mentioned if space permitted.

As previously stated, we are passing through a most disastrous agricultural crisis. Several major problems confront us—problems important enough to require the serious thought and effort of everyone. In the face of such conditions it is little wonder that our farmers are murmuring against the large number of overlapping organizations—some private and many official—which are at the present time assiduously attacking minor and relatively unimportant problems most of which, even though they might be completely solved, would still leave agriculture bankrupt and its major problems still to be worked out.