

NOTES AND NEWS

On May 29, 1939, came word of the passing of our editor and eminent leader of ornithology in western North America, Joseph Grinnell. This issue of the *Condor* was on his desk, the editing of it nearly finished. For thirty-four years the *Condor* was his continued responsibility. His tireless effort, his search for improvements and the guiding influence of his editorial criticism, applied throughout most of the history of the journal, are largely responsible for its scientific and literary standing. We who lately have been privileged to work with him can but marvel at his sustained enthusiasm in his editorial tasks. There is no serious student of vertebrate animals in North America that needs to be reminded of Joseph Grinnell's accurate and prodigious contribution to our literature and to his building of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology as a research institution. Of his personal attributes, only a few can be singled out here in this brief notice as impressing us most forcefully. As we perceived his philosophy, the thing that seemed to him of most lasting value was the published record of research. Writing was his natural outlet, his mode of expression. Yet, the great number of his warm friendships were fostered by no means solely through his extensive correspondence. In conversation he generously gave of his time, listened sympathetically and freely contributed from his great fund of information. Without any overt expression, one soon felt a reserved but wholly genuine personal attachment. He did not in the slightest way presume upon the respect and affection which his associates held for him. He was one who did things and sought no special recognition for it, who avoided time consuming honorary functions because there was so much interesting and valuable work to be done. One of his remarkable qualities in late years was youthfulness of mind, involving the ability to change his views and to criticize his earlier ideas and conclusions. This drew younger persons to him; they admired him, and in turn he relied on them. This was the man, the stimulating teacher, idealist and leader, who is lost to us while still active in the work which only he could do so well.—A.H.M.

According to a report by C. W. Lockerbie in this issue of the *Condor* (p. 170), starlings have now appeared in Utah. It seems that invasion of the Pacific Coast area is imminent. Much as we may regret the anticipated arrival of these birds, there is nothing that can be done to prevent it. Our one consolation is the opportunity we will have to record the way in which an invading species establishes itself. Much may be learned of biological importance if every person interested in birds in the areas now free of starlings

records in fullest detail the circumstances connected with the invasion. Not only the first arrival should command attention, but the many adjustments in populations of starlings and of other birds which will follow the pioneering period should be carefully noted. It will be some time before starlings reach a state of equilibrium in the West, and every shred of information pertaining to their natural history should be gathered during that time. When the English Sparrow spread westward, bird observers were much less numerous than at present and a rather incomplete picture is left us of the details of their dispersal. Will we do better on the starling problem? We are indebted to Dr. Lawrence E. Hicks, who is studying starlings in the Middle West, for recalling to mind our strategic position for the future study of this species.—A.H.M.

A concluding statement in the *Wildlife Research and Management Leaflet of the United States Biological Survey, January, 1939*, by Ralph H. Imler and E. R. Kalmbach is quoted below. The subject of their report is crow damage in Oklahoma, but their conclusions carry implications of a general nature. "Comparison of data obtained from the field with those from questionnaires was possible in one county . . . and it revealed that estimates of the percentage of crops lost was about 6 times, and of financial losses, 16 times greater in the returns from questionnaires than in the data obtained from field appraisal. Estimates of numbers of crows (complicated by the fact that the questionnaire returns may have included duplicate counting of roosts and groups of crows) also were higher in the questionnaire returns. On the whole the study again brought out the fact, long known to economic ornithologists, that the more or less casual appraisal of crop losses by their owners is almost certain to be exaggerated. Some of this is due to that most characteristic of human traits, a tendency to overestimate one's misfortunes. The graphic recollection of the worst experiences encountered, and possibly a none too accurate appraisal of damage in the first place, also may tend to aggravate the seriousness of by-gone events."

MINUTES OF COOPER CLUB MEETINGS

NORTHERN DIVISION

MARCH.—The regular monthly meeting of the Northern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was held on Thursday, March 16, 1939, at 8:00 p. m., in Room 2503 Life Sciences Building, Berkeley, with President Emlen in the chair and sixty-six members and guests present. Minutes of the Northern Division for February were read

and approved. Names proposed for membership were: Mrs. Aniva H. Bobbert, 308 Chestnut Avenue, Palo Alto, California; Jerome Chester Draper, Jr., Tudor Drive, Menlo Park, California; Miss Marion Jo Theobald, Route 1, Box 533, Palo Alto; Mrs. Sarah Jane Trumbo, 636 Melville Avenue, Palo Alto; all these names submitted by Harry R. Painton. Miss Winifred M. Smith, 46 Mace Street, Piedmont, California, was proposed by Junea W. Kelly.

It was announced that the conservation committee would appreciate suggestions concerning its work, and members were urged to forward any ideas which they might have, to the committee members.

Mr. Emlen opened field notes with an account of some 150,000 ducks which had been seen for nearly a month, flying over Davis regularly on their way back and forth from daytime resting pools in the by-pass country to night-time feeding grounds in rice stubble fields 22 miles away. Mr. Alden Miller described the fighting of a Downy Woodpecker "triangle" on a telephone pole. These birds perched lengthwise of the wires, using the tail for support. Mr. Sibley reported Townsend Solitaires at Nortonville, March 5. On March 12, Hooded Mergansers were seen by him near Walnut Creek and a White-tailed Kite near Pittsburg, Contra Costa County. Mr. Mowbray had seen a Black-throated Gray Warbler at Fairfax, Marin County, on March 12. He had recorded the first Cliff Swallow, March 15, at the Life Sciences Building. Mr. David Nichols had been watching Savannah and Song sparrows at the San Mateo Bridge and stated that he desired information on the singing postures of different birds. Mrs. Allen had noted 30 Crossbills near her home in Berkeley. Mr. Alden Miller had seen a Townsend Solitaire not far from his home and had had report of another near Cowell Hospital. Mr. Emlen reported Evening Grosbeaks at Knight's Landing, Yolo County.

Mrs. G. Earle Kelly contributed the main part of the program, an account of "Nesting Activities on the Tundra at Churchill." Lantern slides illustrated descriptions of the landscape, the tundra appearing like upholstery. The journey was not without its trials and tribulations, and cabin accommodations gave shelter from weather which ranged from freezing to very warm and back again with startling rapidity. The bay shores make up a habitat of rocky ledges, gravel beds and mud flats with many little pools. The sedge-covered tundra provides tundra pools. The birds usually have flight songs because of the lack of perches. Upon Mrs. Kelly's arrival, the Horned Larks already were nesting, while the Longspurs were only singing. About 142 bird species are to be found at Churchill, and of these Mrs. Kelly saw 72. The birds are not concentrated in migration as they are here. The first

goslings came out on June 16. Ten species of ducks nested in the vicinity; the Old-squaw was commonest. Parasitic and Long-tailed jaegers were seen harrying the Arctic Terns and the Bonaparte and Herring gulls. The Semipalmated Plover is known as the "bat" in the vernacular, and the snipe is called the "frozen bird" because it sounds like a person shivering. Sandpipers comprised five species. Passerine birds included four species of warblers, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Robin, Canada Jay, Rusty Blackbird, Tree Swallow and many species of sparrow. The only hawks present were the American Rough-legged Hawk, Marsh Hawk and Duck Hawk. The bright reds and browns of the shore-birds harmonize perfectly with the ruddy color of tundra plants. Mrs. Kelly concluded her talk with lantern slides of tundra nests.

Adjourned.—CHARLES SIBLEY, *Acting Secretary*.

APRIL.—The regular monthly meeting of the Northern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was held on Thursday, April 27, 1939, at 8:00 p. m., in Room 2503 Life Sciences Building, Berkeley, with President Emlen in the chair and fifty-two members and guests present. Minutes of the Northern Division for March were read and approved. Minutes of the Southern Division were read by title. Names proposed for membership were: David Gelston Nichols, 1713 Dwight Way, Berkeley, California, by Kathryn Buchanan; James D. Stokes, Library, Division of Fish and Game, Ferry Building, San Francisco, by Bessie W. Kibbe; Granville Wood, 2000 El Camino Real, Palo Alto, California, by Harry R. Painton.

As representing the conservation committee, Mr. Elmer Aldrich reported on a recent meeting in Oakland of the American Wildlife Institute, sponsored by the Junior Chamber of Commerce and attended by sportsmen, sports writers, taxidermists, Biological Survey officials, and members of Audubon Societies and other groups. The principal speaker was Mr. Joseph Hunter, of the California Fish and Game Commission, who outlined the nature and scope of that commission's work.

Mr. Joseph Dixon had observed an American Egret eating meadow mice on a dry pasture in San Diego County, a habitat far from water. Mr. Emlen urged members to watch for any possible effects of the current dry season on bird life. Miss Stedman had already noticed that the large flocks of Cedar Waxwings frequenting her garden in Oakland seemed pleased with apples as food, perhaps because of the juice. Interesting photographs which she had taken of the Waxwings on a window feeding tray were displayed at the close of the meeting. Mr. Cain gave as records for the Boy Scouts' Dimond Camp, a

Townsend Solitaire, April 15, a Bullock Oriole, April 17 (only the second record in 17 years), and Golden-crowned Kinglets, April 22. Mr. Kinsey reported a Townsend Solitaire in Marin County, not traceable to any which might have escaped from his aviaries. He inquired as to whether there were any nesting colonies of Purple Martins within 100 miles of the bay region. Mr. Emlen thought that certain colonies in the Sacramento Valley would come within that radius. There was discussion, initiated by Mr. Kinsey, of the possible effects on birds of eating poisoned grasshoppers in the San Joaquin Valley "plague" areas. Mr. Emlen stated that Mr. Johnson Neff, of the United States Department of Agriculture, had no definite information but believed the damage to be slight. Mr. Twining pointed out that strychnine, if that is the poison used, does not affect gallinaceous birds. Various entomologists were quoted by members to the effect that the newspaper accounts of the grasshopper invasions have been greatly exaggerated.

Mr. Elmer Aldrich spoke on "The Natural History of the Allen Hummingbird," using his own photographs as illustrations. He mentioned some of the difficulties in distinguishing between the Allen and the Rufous hummers in the field. Specialized flights, and the relation of contour and position of wing and tail feathers to sounds produced, were vividly explained by means of blackboard sketches. Many types of nests and nesting sites were shown on the screen, and a series of growth studies was presented of a young bird taken daily from the nest and photographed. Trays of specimens, including some of the large and brilliantly colored tropical species, and many types of nests, furnished interesting displays for the conclusion of the meeting.

Adjourned.—FRANCES CARTER, *Recording Secretary*.

SOUTHERN DIVISION

FEBRUARY.—The regular monthly meeting of the Southern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was held at the Los Angeles Museum on Tuesday, February 28, 1939, at 8 p. m., with President Peyton in the chair and about sixty members and guests present. The minutes of the Southern Division were read and approved. The following applications for membership were read: Robert B. Sanders, 417 South Holliston Ave., Pasadena, California, proposed by Kenneth Stager; C. Selwyn Rich, 114 Charpin Place, Alhambra, California, by W. Lee Chambers; and Mrs. Edna Elden Williams, Posey Star Route, Bakersfield, California, by Mrs. N. Edward Ayer. The secretary announced that Mr. Sidney Platford had tickets for sale for a lecture with motion pictures to be given by Mr. Robert T. Moore on April 19 under the auspices of the California Audubon Society's "Save the Condor" fund.

The speaker of the evening, Mr. Raymond B. Cowles, gave an interesting discussion of the association of phainopeplas and desert mistletoe. In the winter these birds are found feeding on the mistletoe berries. The pulpy material is digested, while the seeds are either regurgitated or defecated. Dropping on to the twigs of the host tree, they adhere and may start new plants. The mesquite trees which are the most frequent hosts exude a gum under the seed, pushing it up away from the branch. In this way, adherence of the new plant is sometimes prevented. Another possible natural check is postulated in the breaking off of the seeds by rodents running over the trees.

Mr. Cowles accompanied his talk with colored slides and an exhibit of mistletoe seed in various stages of development. Following the main subject, the speaker showed a series of colored slides of desert reptiles in which the natural coloring of these often inconspicuous animals was shown to excellent advantage.

Mr. Peyton announced that Mr. Alfred M. Bailey would be able to speak at the next meeting of the Southern Division, if the date could be postponed until April 3. A motion for such postponement was made, seconded and unanimously carried.

Adjourned.—HILDEGARDE HOWARD, *Secretary*.

MARCH.—The March meeting of the Southern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was postponed until Monday, April 3, 1939, in order to make possible the program of the evening. The meeting was held at the Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, with about 100 members and guests present and Mr. Peyton presiding. The minutes of the Southern Division for February were read and approved. One application for membership was read: Mrs. Ruthven Deane, 830 Hibbard Road, Winnetka, Illinois, proposed by W. Lee Chambers. The secretary read an announcement, from the John Muir Association, of a bird walk and supper at the Wistaria Vine Gardens, Sierra Madre, on April 21 at 6:30 p. m.

The speaker of the evening, Mr. Alfred M. Bailey, showed several reels of motion pictures dealing with wild life. The first subject, "Along Audubon's Labrador Trail," dealt with Mr. Bailey's trip over the route taken years earlier by Audubon, and included exceptionally good views of the native birds, many of them nesting. The second subject, "Colorado Wild Life," showed other excellent photographs of nesting and close views of the Sage Grouse dancing. A reel on the Golden Eagle, pictured from a good point of vantage, showed the parent eagle feeding the young in the nest. The last reel, in color, showed views of Yellowstone National Park and included an outstanding sequence of a bull moose in its natural habitat.

Adjourned.—HILDEGARDE HOWARD, *Secretary*.