

NOTES AND NEWS

On August 2, 1945, death came to George Willett, leader and warm personal friend of a host of bird students. In human affairs, as in science, his wisdom and good nature exerted a strong and helpful influence, which will be sorely missed. The Cooper Club counted on him heavily and profited immeasurably from his unselfish devotion to its welfare. He was Secretary of the Cooper Club Corporation and Vice-president of the American Ornithologists' Union, but these positions reflect only a small part of his activity in behalf of ornithology. His extensive field work and his writings will later be recounted in the pages of *The Condor*.—A.H.M.

Volume 5 of Peters' "Check-list of the Birds of the World" made its welcome appearance on the Editor's desk on August 27, 1945. The high esteem in which this work is held perhaps needs no elaboration, but it at least deserves repetition. This volume covers the hummingbirds, trogons, kingfishers, motmots, and horned bills, among others, and thus carries the treatment through the Coraciiformes.

According to a letter recently received by R. T. Orr, David Lack will become Director of the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology in Great Britain on October 1, 1945.

During the past three years there has been increased use of the organic chemical DDT for the control of insects responsible for sickness and discomfort in the Armed Forces. This has been so successful that experimental beginnings have been made to determine its value for control of crop and forest insects. Up to now, little knowledge is available as to what harm may be done to wildlife should DDT be applied on a large scale, but plans have been formulated by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to obtain needed information. Although preliminary studies seem to indicate that few, if any, birds and mammals are likely to be killed by DDT itself, indirect harm may come through reduction in insect-food supplies, especially when applications are made shortly before or during the nesting season. Under forest conditions a single low-concentration application (in oil) for prolonged periods has continued to kill insects that have come in contact with the minute crystals that form after the solvent has evaporated, thus bringing about a prolonged reduction in the total insect population.

Mrs. Amelia Sanborn Allen had an important role in bird study in the San Francisco area for more than forty years. Her death on February 15, 1945, took from the Cooper Club a member with one of the longest records of field activity centered in Berkeley. Her parents moved from New Hampshire to Minnesota and then to Missouri where Amelia Sanborn was born at Winsor on December 29, 1874. The family moved to California in 1888. In the period which followed Amelia was graduated from Pomona College in its second class and then taught school. On several occasions she had opportunity to develop an interest in birds, but failed to respond to any of them.

Within a year after Mrs. Allen came to Berkeley, as the wife of James T. Allen who became Professor of Greek in the University, the writings of Torrey and Keeler aroused her to recognize the presence of birds and the opportunities for interest in them. Progress was slow, as it generally is for a person working alone and without help. It was not until the summer of 1903 when the Allens went to vacation in the mountains with Professor and Mrs. Charles R. Keyes that she finally got on the path to learning birds. By the next summer she had identified 102 species. By 1912 this list reached 132, and in 1921 she had come to know 148 kinds of land birds.

An important event for Mrs. Allen was the coming of Joseph Grinnell to Berkeley in 1908 and the opening of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. The Cooper Club began regular meetings here with ladies welcome. At last, there were numerous persons to share the enthusiasm of making discoveries in the field. In 1911 the Allens moved to a permanent location on the hillside south of Strawberry Canyon and adjacent to the University Campus. Here an intimate acquaintance with the neighboring birds was soon developed which was carried on with few interruptions for more than thirty years. A series of observations was published in the *Condor*, including two long reports, one in 1915 and one making comparisons and summary in 1943. Many groups of persons came to visit and to glimpse the assemblage of birds. Besides the Cooper Club numerous classes in ornithology were given this special treat.

The visit to the Allen home by the Northern Division on New Year's morning 1921 was reported editorially in the *Condor*, as follows: "The occasion was a pleasant one socially, and in addition there was an ornithological feature of remarkable interest. The bird feeding table

just outside the large plate window of the dining room where breakfast was served to the human guests was continually patronized by numerous avian visitors. These latter represented some ten or more species—thrashers, thrushes, wren-tits, towhees, etc.—all wild birds, behaving normally. The differential lighting on the two sides of the window, darker within than without, doubtless in part accounted for the charming obliviousness of the birds. Within, the considerable company of people was able to observe the birds closely under most comfortable conditions, even to comment upon them freely in ordinary conversational pitch of voice, without alarming or distracting the principals in the nature play being acted outside.”

As an outgrowth of observations made at this window, Mrs. Allen began to band birds with bands received in May 1918 from H. H. Cleaves. She then became the first bander in California. Her own account of this early banding, as published in 1922 (*Univ. Calif. Chronicle*, p. 102) included the following information. “The first bird to be marked in this way was a Brown Towhee, which was accidentally caught February 11, 1919. Since that time his mark of identification is easily seen as he feeds on the table, and he is never missing. The next bird to be banded was a Fox Sparrow which was caught in a basement room, March 29, 1919. He migrated with his kind to Alaska soon after, but returned to his winter boarding place November 3, 1919. On April 24, 1920, he started on his second summer trip to Alaska and returned safely again on November 7, 1920. Two Golden-crowned Sparrows were likewise banded March 3, 1920, made their summer journeys to Alaska, where they raise their young, and returned, one on October 23, the other November 15, 1920, and one again on October 25, 1921.” It is no wonder that she concluded that “surprises are certainly in store for those who undertake to do the trapping and banding.”

The field course in natural history given at the University by Dr. Harold C. Bryant was attended by Mrs. Allen in 1913, and like others she received new inspiration from it. Later she conducted field groups of her own and these were joined by women whose concern with birds soon grew beyond the casual stage. Her first trip by special aptitude for detecting and analyzing bird sounds was employed to instill permanent interest. Her first trip by automobile was made in May, 1916. This brought many new localities within range of study, but her chief interest remained in the home surroundings. After 1919 she made trips and longer visits to Boulder Creek, in the Santa Cruz Mountains, an important secondary base for study. The next year Mrs. Allen began to prepare the Season Report on the San

Francisco Region for Bird-Lore. Through 1936 she assembled eight-two of these reports and she continued to supply information for subsequent ones through the remainder of her life. This work gave her a thorough acquaintance with the status of every species in the area.

The Cooper Club History written by Swarth traces the record of Mrs. Allen in the club, as follows: “Early in the history of the Northern Division one or two women were elected to membership at different times. On rare occasions they attended meetings, but the atmosphere was evidently not congenial and feminine memberships at that period did not last long. But times have changed! Mrs. Amelia S. Allen was elected to membership in 1913, and was elected secretary of the Northern Division in 1916. For eight years she remained in this arduous and thankless position, giving such secretarial service as the Northern Division had never had before. No wonder that the termination of this period called for a year of rest abroad! Upon her return in 1925, Mrs. Allen was elected vice-president, and in 1926, president, in recognition of her notable contribution to the Club’s welfare, the first woman to hold such office in either Division.”

In the minutes of the Northern Division meeting on January 24, 1924, at the termination of her long term as secretary, it is recorded that Mr. Swarth called attention to that service and remarked that “doubtless Mrs. Allen would be surprised to learn that the Cooper Club had for once carried through a piece of business without either her knowledge or her help.” She was then presented with a pair of high-grade six-power binoculars and two books: Dresser’s *Manual of Palaearctic Birds*, and Ramsay’s *Guide to the Birds of Europe and North Africa*. These were for use in her contemplated year of bird study in the Old World. An extended report on these experiences was presented at the regular meeting for August, 1926. Three of these trips to Europe, in 1905-1906, 1924, and 1937, brought her many new experiences and an intimate acquaintance with birds of Europe, especially in the South.

Bird students in the San Francisco area have become accustomed to help and to be helped by others of like interests, but among them all none has contributed to the welfare of the group in so many ways and for so long a period as has Mrs. Allen. Her willingness to share knowledge and experience is not likely to be replaced soon.—
JEAN M. LINSDALE.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

“The Family Anatidae,” by Jean Delacour and Ernst Mayr (*Wilson Bull.*, 57, 1945:3-55), is a very timely review of the ducks of the world.