

NOTES AND NEWS

For better protection of the California Condor, the Secretary of the Interior has issued an order withdrawing from entry under mining laws 55 sections, or about 35,200 acres of land, in the Los Padres National Forest in Ventura County, California. The order permits limited entry under the provisions of the Mineral Leasing Act, for oil and gas, dividing the acreage into two categories, one in which there may be no entry on the surface of an area within half a mile of any condor nest known to have been active within three years, and the other a compact tract of 10,240 acres on which no surface entry will be permitted. The latter is a particularly vulnerable part of the condors' nesting and concentration area. Under the terms of the order, any operations in search for oil or gas under the surface of these 16 sections would have to be directional; in other words, by slant drilling from outside the boundaries of the tract. The few existing mineral leases are not affected by the order and will run their course.

The withdrawal order implements the authority of the Forest Service and enables it to make the refuge effective. All other forms of entry than under the provisions of the mining laws and Mineral Leasing Act were already under the control of the Forest Service. Through his action the Secretary of the Interior has established a valuable precedent that holds promise of better protection of endangered wildlife on other federal lands.

Conservationists throughout the country may well take heart. The issue was not easily settled, but the joint action of many conservation organizations and federal agencies carried weight and brought success. The National Audubon Society through its support of the basic research of Carl B. Koford on the natural history of the condor and by the persistent efforts of John H. Baker to establish an effective sanctuary is to be largely credited with this success. Efforts of this kind have meant considerable expenditures by the Society. It is hoped that persons appreciative of this excellent work in the conservation of the California Condor will be willing to contribute to the National Audubon Society in support of this and like undertakings.—A. H. M.

Funds to publish the frontispiece of this issue were generously provided by Dr. I. D. Nokes and Mr. Albert E. Colburn. This, the twelfth of Grayson's paintings appearing in the Condor, shows the Bat Falcon (*Falco albicularis*). From Gray-

son's notes on this species, we have extracted the following comments:

"In the winter of 1863, near the foot of Sierra Madre, not far from the mining town of Panuco in the State of Sinaloa, I saw two small falcons, the smallest I had ever seen. . . . Their movements upon the wing reminded me of the Peregrine Falcon. They were chasing each other in a playful manner, and uttered a sharp whistle as t'chee, t'chee, t'chee. . . . One of them captured a small parrot from a flock which had just settled on the top of a large tree. . . . One morning during my rambles on the Tres Marias (1864), I heard this well remembered note, with great caution commenced searching for it. I soon discovered the little fellow, sitting upon a dry branch of a tall tree. . . . Whilst hunting in the vicinity of San Blas, in an old clearing, I saw one of these hawks dart at and seize a little ground dove, when it was endeavoring to escape. . . . This dove is a swift flyer, but the little peregrine came up with it so suddenly as to make it appear almost stationary, indeed it passed over my head like an arrow just sprung from the bow. I at last succeeded in shooting one near the Rio Mazatlan in the month of February 1867. . . ."

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

MENABONI'S BIRDS. By Athos and Sara Menaboni. Rinehart and Company, Inc., New York and Toronto, 1950. 9×12 inches, 132 pp., 45 full page plates (32 in color, 13 black and white), numerous sketches in text. \$10.00.

The core of this book is the assemblage of reproductions of Athos Menaboni's paintings of birds, which run the gamut of species sizes and types from the Ruby-throated Hummingbird to ducks, herons, Golden and Bald eagles and a turkey. Many of the plates are nicely arranged, colorful and thereby pleasingly decorative. In others, as the Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Wood Thrush, rather dull-colored birds are de-emphasized by the much brighter and more extensive foliage in which they are placed. Menaboni's own admiration for Audubon's work is evident from this as well as from his arrangement of certain birds, such as the Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Blue Jay. Upwardly bent wing-tips seem overdone in some, but not in other paintings. The body proportions or postures of certain of the birds seem unnatural to this reviewer and to others whose opinions were solicited. Thus, the Pileated Woodpeckers (name consistently mis-

spelled in the book) have necks too long and curved, the male and female of the pair of Pintails differ too much in neck thickness, and the Golden Eagle and the female Red-wing seem twisted too far out of natural posture, perhaps to show more of the underside of the tail from a side view.

The publishers have placed the title and short descriptive paragraph pertaining to each plate on the back of the plate which arrangement is not only confusing at first glance but forever disturbing to one looking at a picture of an utterly different species on the page facing it. Up-to-date scientific names are used on most legends, but not on all. The color register of several of the plates in the review copy is bad, and that of several others slightly off. The excessively dense colors in certain plates, for example, the Sparrow Hawk and Bluebird, may also be due, at least in part, to imperfect reproduction. Good quality, dull finish paper is used throughout, and the text is in large clear type. The black and white sketches include, beside birds, such subjects as flowers and large insects. Several of the full-page black-and-whites lack suitable form-giving contrast in places (for example, Mockingbird and Black Skimmer).

The accompanying text, written by Mrs. Menaboni, seems excessively sentimental at first reading, the birds being treated quite anthropomorphically; but gradually the realization grows that an inside story of the life of the Menabonis with their many bird and animal pets, both captive and wild, is being unfolded. Their experiences with many of the subjects of the pictures in the book are recounted, as well as bits of their struggle to attain a home in the woods which would also be a sanctuary for wild creatures. Sara Menaboni thus writes now from their own "Valle Ombrosa" near Atlanta, Georgia, while Athos paints its inhabitants.

Although there can hardly be substantiation for the sweeping claims of the publishers that these paintings of Menaboni's are "the most beautiful, most faithful bird portraits painted in America in more than one hundred years," Menaboni has an excellent ability to show detail as well as texture, especially in wing feathers, and also accomplishes the seemingly difficult task of placing a realistic iridescent gloss on black feathers, as in his painting of the Crow and on the wings of the Golden Eagle. In general, his treatment of color and contrast seems more successful than that of contour and outline. The presence of some of these faults, especially of proportion or position of body parts, keeps some of his paint-

ings from being accurate representations of the birds pictured. Comment upon the fine points of artistic merit is beyond the scope of this review; but certain of the pictures are quite pleasing *in toto*, without considering details which may contain one or more of the faults mentioned above. The reviewer's personal favorites are the Screech Owl, Little Blue Heron, Wild Turkey, and Pileated Woodpecker; and the Wood Duck would probably be as good if the colors had registered properly.—HOWARD L. COGSWELL.

COOPER CLUB MEETINGS

NORTHERN DIVISION

JANUARY.—The monthly meeting of the Northern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was held in Life Sciences Building, University of California, Berkeley, on January 5, 1951. The minutes of the December meeting were read and approved. The following were proposed for membership: Ralph W. M. Keating, 3031 Balboa St., San Francisco, Calif.; William V. Mayer, Dept. Zoology, Univ. of Southern Calif., Los Angeles 7, Calif., both by A. H. Miller. Officers of the previous year were reelected. These are Mrs. Junea W. Kelly, president; Dr. Robert T. Orr, first vice-president; Dr. Charles G. Sibley, second vice-president; Henry E. Childs, Jr., secretary.

Two Starlings were seen at Gridley on December 10 by A. H. Miller. C. G. Sibley told of the collection of a Clark Nutcracker with two acorns on its lower mandible in Santa Cruz County.

The speaker of the evening, Mr. L. E. Richdale, gave a very interesting account of his studies of the Royal Albatross in New Zealand.—HENRY E. CHILDS, JR., *Secretary*.

SOUTHERN DIVISION

NOVEMBER.—The monthly meeting of the Southern Division of the Cooper Ornithological Club was held at 8 p.m., in Allan Hancock Hall, University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

The following names were proposed for membership: Frederick Ashton Allis, 122 W. Fir Ave., Oxnard, Calif., by E. R. Greene; Miss Eva C. Ewing, 1205 Muirlands Dr., La Jolla, Calif., by W. Lee Chambers; James Fisher, Old Rectory, Ashton, Northampton, England, by Edward L. Chalif, and Mrs. Charles H. Hude, 12745 Gravelly Lake Dr., Tacoma, Wash., by S. B. Peyton.

Dr. John Davis, Curator of the Robert T. Moore Ornithological Collections, gave an illustrated talk on the distribution and variation of the Brown Towhee.—DOROTHY E. GRONER, *Secretary*.