

World insect eaters first and the corvine assemblage last, just as six ornithologists raised in the New World would have unanimously favored placing the corvine assemblage first and the New World nine-primaried birds last.

Since the congress at Basel, there has been a decided swing away from the arrangement proposed by the committee. In addition to the three classifications mentioned earlier (Amadon, 1957; Delacour and Vaurie, 1957; and Storer, MS), the recent list of Finnish birds by Merikallio (Fauna Fennica 5, 1958:1-181), the recent check-list of Swedish birds by Lundevall (Förteckning över Sveriges Faglar, 4th ed., Almqvist and Wiksell Gebers Förlag A.B., Stockholm, 1958), and Vaurie's forthcoming check-list of Palearctic birds may be cited as examples of new works using the "finches last" arrangement. However, it was probably the earlier decision of the British Ornithologists' Union to follow this arrangement and the subsequent appearance of Peterson, Mountfort, and Hollom's, *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*, 1954, which were most influential in establishing this trend. Whether or not we are willing to admit it, most of us are prejudiced in favor of the first classification we learn. In most cases this is the system followed in our field guides. Thus, when one field guide like that of Peterson, Mountfort, and Hollom is used so widely, its importance in teaching younger ornithologists a system of classification which they will probably favor all their lives should not be underestimated.

It thus appears that in spite of the proposal by the Basel committee, the order almost universally followed in the New World is fast gaining support in the Old World. The major opposition appears to stem from the editors of Peters' Check-List of Birds of the World, Mayr and Greenway (*Breviora*, 58, 1956:1-11). It is, of course, their right to decide on the arrangement to be followed in this work, but in following the arrangement which places the corvine assemblage last, they are not following the system used by Peters himself as a member of the American Ornithologists' Union Committee on Classification and Nomenclature, by the majority of contributors to Peters' Check-List as indicated by their published classifications or major regional works, or by the majority of English-speaking ornithologists. If their aim is, as Mayr apparently feels it should be (*Condor*, 60, 1958:194-195), to effect a sequence which will be followed by most ornithologists, they would have a far better chance of achieving it if they used that followed by the A.O.U. and the B.O.U.—ROBERT W. STORER, *Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 1, 1958.*

Notes on the Taxonomy and Zoogeography of the Genus *Elanus*.—I had finished a short manuscript on the genus *Elanus* when I read Parke's recent paper on the same subject (*Condor*, 60, 1958:139-140). My paper was based on a short talk I gave in the Bird Biology Conference held at Oxford in the first week of January, 1958. I now think that there is no need of publishing that portion of my paper which deals with the species relationships in the genus *Elanus*. My views almost entirely agree with those of Parkes, but there are some points which are not discussed by him.

The under wing coverts which were described by previous authors (Mathews, *Birds of Australia*, 5, 1915-1916:206; and others) as pure white in *E. caeruleus* are not always so. In other forms there is more or less black forming a patch, and it is largest in *E. scriptus*. Some of the under wing coverts in *E. caeruleus* have black tips, especially in the Indian race *E. c. vociferus*. Perhaps at one time this form possessed a black patch on the under wing coverts which later became reduced. It should be noted that Gurney (*Ibis*, 3[11], 1879:330-341) was the first author to suggest that *leucurus* of America should be considered a subspecies of *notatus* of Australia. He, however, said nothing about *caeruleus*, probably because of the supposed absence of the black patch on the under wing coverts. In my paper I also pointed out that *scriptus* appears to be the earlier arrival in Australia, as suggested by Mathews (*op. cit.*), and not *notatus*, as Condon and Amadon (*Rec. South Austr. Mus.*, 11[2], 1954:159-246) think.

The history of the genus *Elanus* may be outlined as follows: The genus most probably evolved somewhere in the Oriental or Ethiopian region from where it extended to Australia and America. In Australia, it gave rise to *E. scriptus*, which retained the large black patch on the under wing coverts, while the original Afro-Asian population was gradually losing it. After a long interval, the Afro-Asian population extended to America (*E. c. leucurus*) and again to Australia (*E. c. notatus*). These two groups, *leucurus* and *notatus*, retained the reduced black patch, but in the Afro-Asian population it became further reduced, so that it is now represented only by the black tips of some of the under wing coverts. In Australia, *E. scriptus* was sufficiently different to be reproductively isolated by the

time of the second invasion (now *E. c. notatus*) as is revealed by the co-existence today of the two forms without any intergradation and interbreeding.

I wish to thank Dr. A. J. Cain, Dr. D. Lack, and Mr. J. D. Macdonald for advice and encouragement in the course of this work.—K. Z. HUSAIN, *Department of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy, University Museum, Oxford, England, August 25, 1958.*

Breeding Record of the Double-crested Cormorant in South-central Alaska.—On July 7, 1958, at Lake Louise in the Susitna River drainage system of south-central Alaska, a small colony of

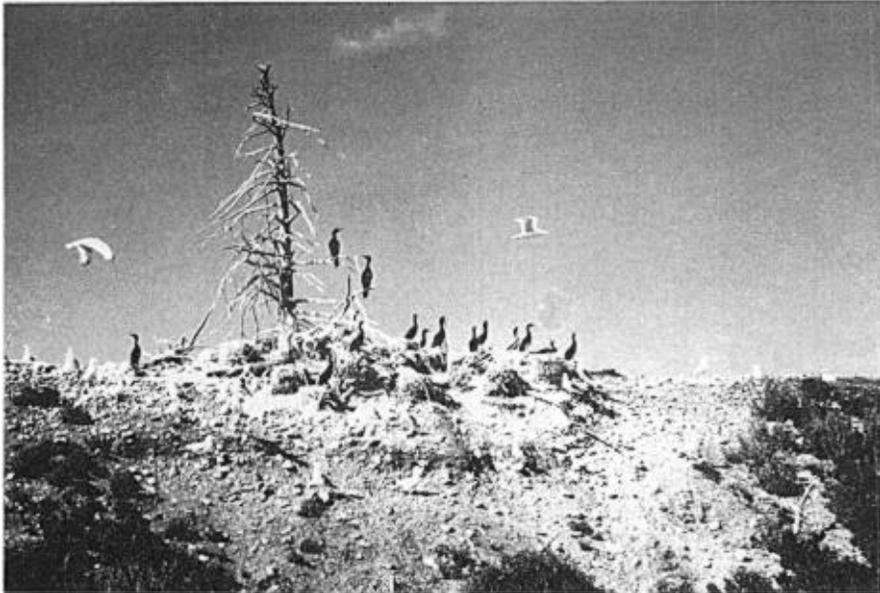


Fig. 1. Double-crested Cormorant colony at Lake Louise, 1958. Note the Herring Gulls around the colony.

breeding Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) was found, and a visit was made to the nesting area. The colony is located about 25 feet above the water level on the highest point of a small knoll-shaped island. The island is approximately 200 yards long and 50 yards across at the widest point. The area about the colony (fig. 1) is barren and gravel-strewn, but otherwise the island is sparsely covered with low shrubby vegetation. This vegetation is considerably more dense on the north, or leeward, side. An old spruce, devoid of vegetation, stands in the colony.

The 25 nests which comprise the colony were examined, and the results are as follows: empty, 15; with one egg, 1; with two eggs, 1; with one young, 1; with two young, 1; with three eggs and one young, 1. The remaining five nests were in a state of disrepair and empty.

The number of empty nests in a state of recent repair seems to indicate heavy predation by members of the large colony of Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) that share this island. The interest of the Herring Gulls in the cormorant nests was demonstrated when the 40 to 50 adult cormorants were frightened from the area during our visit. On our departure many gulls returned immediately and perched on the nests or walked among them. The cormorants returned slowly, and even then a few gulls remained nearby.

The lack of synchrony in the breeding effort as evidenced by the presence of eggs, newly-hatched young, and, in one nest, advanced young (fig. 2) appears to be the normal situation in colonies of this species (Bent, U. S. Nat. Mus. Bull. 121, 1922:245). The general appearance of the colony, including the barren surroundings and great height and bulk of the nests, indicates that these birds have been present in the area for some years. Reproduction must be, to some extent, successful.

The known breeding range of the Double-crested Cormorant in Alaska includes the eastern