

NOTES AND NEWS

Members of the Cooper Society are again reminded of the dates of the Annual Meeting in Los Angeles in May of 1960. Scientific sessions are on Friday and Saturday, May 6 and 7. A tour of the Ray Thomas Aviary and a reception at the Los Angeles County Museum are scheduled for Thursday, May 5, in the afternoon and evening, and a field trip is planned for May 8.

A few copies of the January Condor have been found to be defective, with pages missing and duplication of others. Please send in faulty copies at once to Jack C. von Bloeker for replacement.

The editors call attention to the recent publication of three important books which, although not reviewed in detail here, are highly recommended to our readers. These are:

Wildlife of Mexico, The Game Birds and Mammals, by A. Starker Leopold, illustrated by Charles W. Schwartz (University of California Press, 1959, 568 pp., \$12.50).

Life Histories of Central American Birds, Part II, by Alexander F. Skutch, illustrated by Don R. Eckelberry (Pacific Coast Avifauna No. 34, Cooper Ornithological Society, 1960, 593 pp., \$15.00).

The Waterfowl of the World, Volume 3, by Jean Delacour, illustrated by Peter Scott (Country Life Ltd., London, 1959, 270 pp., approximately \$17.60 at current exchange).

Notice is again given of the availability of \$600 from the Josselyn Van Tyne Memorial Fund for aid in ornithological research. Any student of birds who has a special need for equipment, travel, assistance, or materials to further his research is invited to submit an application (10 duplicate copies) for a portion or all of the money available. This application should give a full description of the proposed research, the type of help that is required, when the money should be made available, the background and training of the applicant, and other pertinent information. The applications will be evaluated and rated by the Research Committee of the A.O.U. to determine how the funds will be allotted.

All applications for grants must be in the hands of the chairman not later than June 1, 1960.—S. CHARLES KENDEIGH, *Chairman, Vivarium Building, University of Illinois, Wright and Healey Sts., Champaign, Illinois.*

From time to time the editors wish to draw to the attention of the readers of the Condor meaningful statements on conservation issues. Recently one of our members, Ian I. McMillan, has stated forthrightly some of his views and observations on conflicting procedures and programs that masquerade as conservation and desirable land use. We present parts of his letter to a worker concerned with agricultural extension services:

From where I sit I can look out on an expanse of good land that under applied research has taken a beating that only "applied research" could administer. We burn the cover from land that should remain in cover. We bulldoze down the trees to plant surplus crops on land that will not sustain cultivated crops. We dam the flood waters from denuded range to water more cattle so that the range can be further denuded. We supplement the forage on overgrazed ranges so that further ruin can be accomplished. On depleted, abused grain land we spray the weeds that grow on abused land, and we spray the grasshoppers that eat only the weeds. While normal amounts of rainfall bring floods of topsoil from cultivated, exposed slopes that should never have been cultivated, we spray the clouds in an effort to increase the rainfall and further accelerate the ruin, all under official guidance. We poison just about everything. We began a campaign a few years ago to eradicate the spotted alfalfa aphid that, if accomplished, would have also exterminated an insect fauna without which agriculture could not exist. This movement started, evidently, without even a juvenile concept of ecological principles. At public expense, we poison rodents on land placed in the Soil Bank at more public expense, as a measure to curtail the production of burdensome crop surplus. We poison the predators that prey on the same rodents.

I point this out to qualify, if possible, an objection to any more of the kind of "applied research" that has led to all this land-use travesty and fraud. Extension Services, more than any other forces, are responsible for this land-use picture. What they have done, however innocently, is to encourage and advise toward maximum, immediate, economic exploitation of the land without regard for end results. They have demonstrated and advocated only that which is most profitable economically. I have never noted any real concern for conservation or the future.

Through their influence and tutelage we have, on the local level, a leadership of prosperous ignoramuses.

Some of the questions that it is hoped will be answered through [your proposed study of rodent control] are questions that I had understood were officially answered before, or at least during, the vast control programs of the past four decades. Can this proposal be an admission by the boys who claimed to have all the answers that they really didn't know what they were doing? Why, after years of the wildest kind of control programs, purportedly based on scientific research, must we now start looking for the answers? And are we to rely now on the same school of thought that has previously been in error?

I certainly agree that we need research, but biased research is worse than none at all. And when economic interests such as the "progressive group of ranchers" mentioned in the proposal enter the picture, my eyebrows automatically elevate. I'm one of them and I know their outlook. They like your kind of research, . . . and if they didn't I'm sure you wouldn't be proposing this project. I don't like the idea of one contending faction dominating the research on such a broad, controversial matter as rodent and predator control.

I am, however, somewhat curious as to the complete origin of this proposal. As you will agree, this kind of a project can be as much a human relations vehicle as anything else. It would be a major catastrophe in my opinion, to have it contribute to the further spread of the poison-burn-spray epidemic that is already rampant throughout California.

Programs of the Southern Division of the Cooper Society in 1959 and early 1960 have included Dr. William Beckwith, Department of Psychology, University of California, Los Angeles, speaking on "The Study of Imprinting," on May 26; Dr. Andrew Starrett, Department of Biology, University of Southern California, on "The Biogeography of Costa Rica," on September 26; Kenneth Stager of the Los Angeles County Museum, on "The Machris-Los Angeles Museum Expedition to India," on October 27; a film by Mr. Charles W. Schwartz of the Missouri Conservation Commission, on "The Life History of the Mourning Dove," on November 28; and Dr. Walter P. Taylor, presenting "Travel Notes of a Naturalist," on January 27.

Northern Division programs since November, 1959, have presented Mrs. Betsey D. Cutler, Department of Biology, San Francisco State College, speaking on "Birds of West Bengal," on November 5; George E. Lawrence, Bakersfield College, on "Vertebrate Survival in Brush Fires," on December 3; Dr. Robert C. Miller, Director of the California Academy of Sciences, on the question "Do Birds Perceive Radar?" on January 7; and Gordon H. Orians, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, on "Spring and Fall Breeding in the Tricolored Blackbird," on February 4.

Recently the extensive private collection of birds of the late Ralph Ellis, Jr., has been given to the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at Berkeley through the generosity of the former Mrs. Ellis in pursuance of the intent of Mr. Ellis. For many years the collection has been on deposit at the Museum for the use of research workers there.