

NOTES AND NEWS

Shortly following the appearance of this issue of *The Condor*, the Cooper Ornithological Society will hold its Annual Meeting at the University of Texas in Austin. The scientific sessions are scheduled for Friday and Saturday, April 19 and 20. Field trips are arranged for visits to the Edwards Plateau on Thursday and to parts of south-central Texas on Sunday.

The closing date for receipt of National Science Foundation grant applications in the spring is May 15; the next closing date is September 15.

This past winter along the Pacific coast of North America there have been many reports of unusually low numbers of winter visitant birds. So far as we know these reports reflect subjective impressions and not accurate censuses of the kind needed to form a sound basis for comparison. Especially noticeable in many sections of coastal California has been the greatly reduced population of American Robins. There is little doubt that something has changed, or that something is unusual about this season, but facts are not available and scientific explanations therefore cannot be offered. The recent appearance of Rachel Carson's important book "Silent Spring" has naturally made people wonder if the bird populations of this area and especially those of robins have suffered from insecticide campaigns and widespread use of dangerous chemicals—dangers which she has so well and in such timely fashion drawn to notice. We are rightly apprehensive. The thing that needs to be done however is for ornithologists to institute thorough censuses and observations so as to learn all we can of numbers, directions of movements, and changed locations of concentration points of the birds concerned. Research on the specific and long-range effect of poisons themselves requires experienced personnel and special facilities. It also requires personnel devoted to finding the real influence of poisons and not those beholden, subtly or otherwise, to organizations with special interests in the manufacture and application of chemicals.—A.H.M.

A few years ago L. L. Snyder published a very worthy article entitled "Collect the Bird" (*Oriole*, 24, 1959:21-25). The continuing need to educate

ornithologists in the necessity of documenting occurrences by collecting and the recurrent lapses in understanding by permit-granting agencies of the great importance of positively encouraging research by authorizing collecting, leads us to quote parts of Snyder's statement:

"A sight record of the unusual has low face value in print unless it has been checked and rechecked . . . and fully and clearly documented. 'Collect the bird,' says Ludlow Griscom, according to Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher in *Wild America* (p. 106), and the authors add, 'Scientific ornithological tradition demands that the first record of a new species for a region be substantiated by a specimen.' The writer would add that in his opinion this procedure should not be limited to the first record. . . . There are some people who object to the collecting of birds. They are inclined to believe that this procedure is unnecessary and inconsistent with the urgency of conservation. I wish to state that it *is* necessary, and it has a negligible effect on bird population. Frederick C. Lincoln (*Auk*, 48:540, 1931) presents a list of the known causes of death among banded birds, giving the agencies in the order of frequency. Next to the bottom, immediately before miscellaneous causes which includes being struck down by golf balls, we find scientific collectors. He shows that this cause of death amounts to .000015 of 1 per cent of all known causes, and we can be sure that all such cases were reported."

Snyder goes on with many other excellent points which for reasons of space are not repeated here, but which should be read by every ornithologist and permit-granting officer.—A.H.M.

Programs of divisional meetings of the Cooper Ornithological Society in the past few months have included: "Chaparral Bird Populations and Territory Sizes," by Howard L. Cogswell in Berkeley on November 1; "New Nations of Africa: politics, economics, and the future of wildlife and waterfowl resources," by George Treichel in Berkeley on December 6; "Insular Faunas and Icelandic Birds," by Frank A. Pitelka in Berkeley on January 3; "Zoological Investigations in Nicaragua," by Thomas R. Howell in Los Angeles on November 28; and "The Role of Olfaction in Food Location by the Turkey Vulture," by Kenneth Stager in Los Angeles on January 30.