

SHORT NOTES.

Mr. Arthur T. Wayne, Mt. Pleasant, S. C., writes: "Heard but a single Pine Linnet this year!" He also mentions finding a nest of the Bald Eagle containing two almost fresh eggs, on January 20. The nest was in an enormous dead pine tree, 101 feet and 8 inches high. The tree was struck by lightning last summer. His record of a Great Horned Owl's nest containing two young birds, one of them about ten days old, on January 22, is probably the earliest for that bird yet recorded. The nest was in the top of a 'green' pine about 90 feet from the ground, and contained, besides the two young birds, a large rat with its head eaten off.

Mr. G. M. Burdick writes that between March 9 and 14, Bluebird, Robin, Bronzed Grackle, Red-winged Blackbird and Meadowlark, arrived at Milton Junction, Wis.

Under date of March 12, Miss Caroline Mathews, Waterville, Me., writes: "We shall not have the birds with us very early this spring, as the snow is still deep." It was the same day that 40 species were recorded at Oberlin, Ohio, 13 of them new records for the year.

OUR COMMITTEES FOR 1898.

How many Final Report Special Bulletins shall we have this year? That entirely depends on the work of individual members. For several years we have been working upon the Warblers, the subject being divided into three heads. One of these has to do with the breeding birds only—Nesting—and is capable of development along lines of the greatest value, if each member will lend his earnest aid to the chairman, Mr. H. C. Higgins, Cincinnati, N. Y. Surely each member can watch a nest of the Yellow Warbler from its beginning until the young have left. Many may be able to do the same with some one or more of the other more or less common species. Will not each one make an earnest effort to contribute to this report at the close of the nesting season of 1898? The information you will gain from such a study will be far greater than you may imagine.

The migrations of the Warblers are peculiarly interesting because of the uncertainty of their appearance during any season. In this subject lie many interesting problems of the influence of weather upon bird

movements. But aside from any such problems, it is in the migrating season that we must look out for the Warbler host if we are to find it at all, for the greater part of our species are strictly transients. Hence, a study of their migrations means acquaintance with a far greater number of them than are to be found in summer. Mr. J. E. Dickinson, Rockford, Ill., has charge of this work, and he will be glad to put you in the way of it.

When we study the songs of the Warblers we begin to get nearer to their inner life and to know something of the bird as a sentient being. This is an essential part of the life history, and one of the most interesting parts. Here, again, we must be on the lookout for them as they go to and fro on their migrations if we are to hear many of them singing. Aside from the sentiment of song there are some interesting problems which need working out, and with time and patience we can hope to do it. The diurnal as well as the seasonal period of song has never been carefully worked out for even the commonest of the group. Here is an open field. An attempted description of a song is always an aid to the memory, and may often result in valuable contributions; but at best it is difficult and unsatisfactory because our vocabulary is not suited to representation of bird songs, and our powers of imitation are too imperfect and feeble. But even here a great deal may be done by patience and appreciation.

We know what the food of the Warblers is in a general way, but many of the particulars are still hidden. I cannot advocate killing the birds for the purpose of learning what they eat, but if they must be killed for some other purpose it would be a shame not to examine the contents of the stomach and make a record of what is found. An accumulation of such records would be of great value in determining the food habits of our birds. If a bird must be killed its dead body should be made to tell as much of the history of that species as it is capable. But a study of the stomach contents will tell only a part of the story of the food habits, because the birds eat many things which leave no remains in the stomach. Then by carefully watching the birds in the field we may learn not a little about what they eat. The study of Food and Song is under the direction of Lynds Jones, Oberlin, Ohio. Any notes or suggestions will be thankfully received.

Mr. Frank L. Burns, Berwyn, Pa., is still studying the Flicker, and he will be glad to put you in the way of helping forward his report to completion. Write to him without delay.

The report upon the Swallows is nearing completion, and is only wait-

ing for more notes. Mr. Stephen J. Adams, Cornish, Maine, desires any and all notes from all sections of the country at once so that the work of compiling may begin. Any note you may have will be a welcome addition to his report.

I am glad to refer you to the announcement of the Committee on Geographical Distribution, which appears in this issue. Read it and act upon its suggestions.

LYNDS JONES, *Chairman of Work.*

COMMITTEE ON GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

FURTHER MECHANICAL HELPS TO OBSERVATION.

Several of our members having taken so kindly to the suggestions made in BULLETIN No. 14 with reference to *daily horizons* and *bird censuses*, I venture to submit other ideas along the same line. By speaking of mechanical helps, I do not refer to instruments which observers may use, such as opera glasses, camera, etc., (purposely omitting the shot-gun), but rather to those schemes or methods of study which may fairly be called mechanical.

First in importance after those already discussed I should place the *annual horizon*, or local list for the year. This may be, if you please, a formal list, such as the U. S. Dept. of Agriculture provides for in its migration blanks, or it may simply be indicated by a series of consecutive numbers, running through your note-book. For my part, I employ the latter method, throwing a circle around each number; so as to make it stand out from the page, and catch the eye in hasty reference.

Always record first appearances, no matter what the season or what its possible bearing on migration. By so doing one gets into the way of expecting old bird friends, and refuses to be satisfied until he has seen them. So too, one gets the winter residents straightened out in his mind, and notes untimely appearances that would be overlooked by the man who is jotting down only migration records in the height of the season. Begin on the first day of January, if possible, and follow it through, according to opportunity, until the 31st day of December.

This annual horizon should have a definite local significance; that is, the limits of observation should be decided upon at the beginning of the year and adhered to throughout. Such a section as one expects to frequent the most will of course be chosen. Many valuable and instructive