

COMMUNICATIONS

OTTAWA FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB

Moved by P. A. Tavener. Seconded by W. T. Macoun. Carried—
Hoyes Lloyd, President.

Whereas, many of our finest and most interesting birds that formerly bred in what are now settled localities are so seriously reduced in number as to be in danger of extermination and,

Whereas, we are occasionally discovering stations still occupied by these birds in territories that are easily accessible to those who have not the welfare of these birds at heart. Therefore

Be it Resolved, that the Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club places itself on record as believing,—

That whilst it is important that all such information should be brought to the attention of science, it is inexpedient to publish the same where it may become common property. They therefore

Recommend that such information be filed only in the records of duly accredited and continuing institutions that have a serious interest in the study and preservation of wild life and where it may be available for qualified research students of approved discretion, for future generations or until the wider dissemination of the information can do no harm to the species concerned.

Further, that all who discover such information are urged to transmit it to such institutions as are particularly interested and equipped for recording such confidential information and to no one else on whose discretion they cannot rely.

Further, that such institutions record the information so received in such a manner that its confidential nature will not be violated, that it may be available at any time to those who have a legitimate interest in it, and that it may not be lost or forgotten through lack of present publication.

However, be it understood that nothing in these resolutions be deemed to prevent the information being given privately and under the seal of confidence to such students who have a legitimate interest in it and will not use it improperly or cause or permit others to do so.

BIRD GOLF

(Portland Evening Express, May 4, 1923)

Not so long ago there appeared in this column a description of a new and novel game called Bird Golf, the invention of a former Maine man, John Warren Achorn, who lives in Pinebluff, North Carolina. I have just received a letter from him in which he is good enough to give further details anent this game, including the rules. The letter follows:

The Sand Hills Bird Club of Pinebluff, and the Savannah Audubon Society are the only two bird clubs in this part of the South, and strange to say, both clubs are under the management of Maine men.

H. B. Skeele of Oxford County, Maine, is president of the Savannah Audubon Society, while I hold a similar position with the Sand Hills Bird Club. By vote of the commissioners of this town within its corporate limits was made a bird reservation November 6, 1922. The town is a mile and a half east and west, and a mile on its north and south line. It is well watered by constant streams, and there are two artificial lakes within the town limits, the larger lake being nearly a mile long. There is plenty of cover for the birds in winter along these streams or branches, evergreen cover. We have built 150 bird houses and bird boxes this year and have set them up for purple martins, bluebirds, wrens, tree swallows and the like. We plan for 500 bird houses and boxes. The town itself has only 120 houses and camp cottages in it, but it boasts electricity and running water, so we can and do live like other folks.

Here, under the auspices of the Sand Hills Bird Club, we train our bird scouts to know by sight 50, 75, or 100 birds. One student coming here from Pennsylvania, between February 24 and April 23, has learned to recognize in the field 100 birds. She has been decorated a master scout. There are at least six other students who will pass the 100 mark this season. Students have come from as far away as Ohio.

When a Bird Club starts here in the South our plan is to send to that club one of our bird scouts—who shall teach half a dozen "grown ups" to recognize and know at least 50 birds in the field. In this way the foundation for field work is laid, and once started right it will grow steadily. In no other way can everyday bird clubs of limited resources in the South be advanced, according to our view. Mrs. E. C. Ritchie of Camden, S. C., started a Junior Civic League last fall, listing 60 members at the initial meeting. There were beautiful presents for the best imitation bird costume, for the best imitation bird call, for the best bird poem or story, etc., with introductory talks and stories by older people and refreshments beyond compare, but no out-of-door work of any kind. Last week she wrote us that the very boys who took prizes at the opening session were out on the streets with slingshots firing away at every bird they saw, with intent to kill. The parents of these children buy their slingshots for them.

The way to save situations like this is to teach the children to hunt birds for identification with a bird glass instead of with a slingshot, and this is what, with the bird scouts we develop, we shall hope to start new bird clubs doing. In the North there are always older members and beginners in any club who are equal to teaching the younger members and beginners of uncertain age, to know and recognize birds in the field. In the South we have no such background upon which to found a club, and so we are trying to devise a plan that will work.

We must have the National Associations of Audubon Societies behind us, and a pocket bird guide that will picture the land birds in winter around us as they actually appear, with characteristic descriptions that will help in the identification. Then we will succeed and the bird clubs in the South will multiply. It was to help this idea along that Bird Golf was developed. It's a sporty game when played with fair skill, but,

like any other game, drags when there are unskilled players in any set.

The Rules of the Game and a score card were enclosed in the letter from Mr. Achorn. The rules are as follows:

Revised Rules

Time of short game, 1 hour and 30 minutes. Time of each link, 10 minutes. Time limit for return 2 hours. Time of long game, 2 hours and 15 minutes. Time of each link, 15 minutes. Time limit for return, 2 hours and 45 minutes. Preferably, two players, with Bird Scout, constitute a "Set." Each set decides for itself when and where to start to play. Play begins with the first seen, if counted. Overtime play on any link must be deducted from the next link. Only birds recognized by two or more in any set count. Birds must be recognized by their conspicuous field markings, colors, flight, size, actions, mate, etc. Birds known only by their song or call notes, do not count. Birds of a species or either bird of a pair recognized, but sex not determined, count as a male bird. Birds of a kind identified count but once in a game. Male birds count 1, and female birds count 3.

Number of birds seen long enough for identification, but not made out, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

It would seem to me that with all the data furnished by our good friend that those interested will be able to try out this game. Indeed, why cannot Portland, Me., have a club similar to the one way down South?

NEEDED: POCKET BIRD GUIDE OF LAND BIRDS IN WINTER IN THE SOUTH

There are hundreds of northern tourists, south in winter, who would keep up their amateur bird studies and their everyday interest in birds, if they were as completely provided with colored identification plates, of birds that winter in the south, as they have been provided with plates covering the spring migrations, and the appearance of birds at that season, in our northern tier of states. This question of interest in birds in the south in winter is largely one of identification. These northern bird tourists with tuneful ears—ear and eye students we will call them—have been "raised" on the colorful appearance of our birds during the spring migrations, and on listening in at their mating songs; and upon these two factors, and "call notes" their skill in identification rests to a considerable degree.

In the south, from November until March, birds are not in song. Many of them are in their traveling suits instead of their wedding clothes, their characteristic markings in many cases are wanting or different, the classic pictures of males in our popular bird books, based on northern coloring, are of little help for purposes of identification, while the descriptions of females that end with the discourteous phrase, "paler and duller," are often well matched by the poor illustrations that go with them. Bird students, native to the south, see birds wintering in the vicinity of their homes, whose dress and colors do not tally with any pictures in the bird books in their possession. Ear and eye students from the north become of necessity sight students in the

south. For many bird students, the perceptive faculties are the best faculties they possess. Natives and tourists alike when on a "hunt" exclaim in dismay, "Oh, that's a sparrow" if they flush one or more in the fields they are crossing and they often do. To them all sparrows look alike. They turn to their pocket guides for help, but the illustrations in them are too poor to be of much use, to students of limited experience. Mighty few amateurs can identify difficult birds in the field from written descriptions in our standard bird books. The thing is too difficult, too *fuscous* (fuss-cuss). Practically all amateur bird students south in the winter are up against it. With the aid of accurate plates where identification is difficult and with the help of descriptions that are as characteristic as possible, this feature of bird study in the field, now so discouraging to many, would be met and overcome. The identification once made by never so limited an observer, is seldom lost, because *all sparrows are so different*. Breaks in the final identification of birds seen almost daily, are disconcerting. Some students, because of this, lose zest for certain groups of birds, while others lose confidence in their powers of observation. May this not be a fundamental reason why bird study in the south has progressed so slowly. The exact opposite should be the case. The trees are not in leaf, our winter birds are not so numerous, as to discourage beginners, out of door conditions are favorable and the going is good. With our winter birds known, as a background, amateurs are equal to the spring migration. They are not as likely to lose their heads, as they otherwise would be, when thirty varieties of warblers and half as many birds of other kinds come trooping along with their ladies at their heels.

Bird study that began in New England years ago has gradually spread over the country. But northern pictures and descriptions do not always square with southern needs and conditions in many vital particulars. We should have those particulars because we need them. We need a Pocket Bird Guide, done in colors of a certain percentage of the birds that winter inland in the south; a book that young and old will enjoy to look at and study, and one that everybody can afford to buy. Then we will see bird clubs multiply. Then eye and ear students from the north will become diligent sight students in the south, and our native students will not "give it up" but "get busy" and finally challenge all comers for honors in this field of endeavor.

JOHN WARREN ACHORN,
President Sand Hills Bird Club.