

THE WILSON BULLETIN

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EDITORIAL

An unusually large number of copies of the September BULLETIN were returned by the Postoffice Department, because the members had changed their addresses without notifying us of the new addresses. The postage due on a returned copy is six times the outgoing, second-class rate. If the member later calls for the returned copy, postage must be affixed to carry it, unless it is held until the next general mailing.

To obviate much of this difficulty we urge the members to notify us promptly of any permanent change of address; and this notification should reach us before the 15th of the month of publication. We will always be glad to supply missing numbers to members, but if the member wishes to receive such missing number before the next general mailing, postage should be sent.

We advise members not to send in a change of address for the summer vacation, but the Editor will be very glad, upon request, to send any single number to a temporary address without changing the mailing list.

We have recently heard some discussion of "life lists." By a life list is meant a total list of birds with which the observer has made a field acquaintance. This also implies that the list includes only species seen in the living state. Therefore, museum specimens, game killed by hunters or found in the market, are excluded.

To make the pursuit of a life list possible and enjoyable there should be certain rules of the game. It does not seem fair to take into account subspecies, since, in so many cases, subspecies cannot be distinguished in the field; and also because subspecies have been worked out more fully and minutely in certain parts of the world. Subspecies are for laboratory study, rather than for field study.

A life list of 150-250 species may be expected by the local observer in most parts of the country. To run the list up to 300 or over most students would have to travel beyond the boundaries of their local regions; and the upper limit of the list would, doubtless, depend upon the amount and extent of such extralimital study.

To what extent a long life list is profitable, and to what extent it is an index of ornithological erudition is, probably, a debatable subject. Which, for instance, is preferable and more scholarly, a superficial acquaintance with a long list of species, or a more intensive knowledge of a smaller number? The student may take his choice, or must be limited by circumstances. Anyway, who has the longest life list?