

THE WILSON BULLETIN

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EDITORIAL

WHAT is the best and surest way of describing the locality of specimens, so that the location will be intelligible one hundred years hence? We have recently had occasion to look over the lists of specimens compiled by Prof. S. F. Baird in Volume IX of the Pacific Railroad Reports, published in 1858. Localities which were then well known, doubtless, are now more or less puzzling. For instance, many records were credited to this and that place in Nebraska Territory. But at that time Nebraska Territory included Wyoming, Montana, and both Dakotas, besides the present state of Nebraska. Political boundaries, even though they seem to be more stable now, are subject to change in a hundred years. We note also that many records are attributed to islands in the Missouri River. Even if these islands still exist some effort is required to locate them, since the abandonment of river traffic has removed our attention from the river and its islands. And the river, in cutting from one side of its flood plain to the other, has often changed the boundaries of states.

A great many records are located by the early frontier forts. While they are unfamiliar in many cases, they can be traced and related to present geography. Still other specimens are assigned to such obscure early localities as Pole Creek, Bijoux Hill, The Tower, Loup Fork, Little Blue, Iowa Point, Bridger's Pass, etc., etc., all somewhere within the boundaries of the present five states which then comprised Nebraska Territory. With such a method of location of specimens the zoologist will have to take his turn as historian and geographer. The only alternative we can see for him is to take training as astronomer and navigator, and locate his specimens with the aid of compass and theodolite. The authors of seventy-five years ago little realized how soon their locality terms would become obsolete; nor do we probably realize the changes which will take place in the next similar period of time. An unstable nomenclature is surely worry enough, without the addition of instability or uncertainty of location. Perhaps the only suggestion to be made is concerning the importance of including with every locality record, or list, a very full geographical description.

As an indication of the bibliographer's difficulty we may point out that the Volume IX previously cited lists Bridger's Pass, Nebr. (p. 19), Bridger's Pass, Utah (p. 312), Bridger's Pass, K. T. (p. 520), and Bridger's Pass, no state location (p. 40).

THE SKETCH of the life of Dr. C. W. Richmond by Dr. Stone in the *Auk* for January brings to our mind again the loss which frequently comes to science in the death of men who work unostentatiously and whose labor is appreciated most after it ceases. Dr. Richmond had many friends among people who never had met him personally. There were two outstanding characteristics of Dr. Richmond to account for this, viz., his profound knowledge of ornithological literature and his exalted unselfishness. Apparently, he was always ready to share his knowledge, or go to some trouble to look up information for inquirers, and then to allow them the privilege of publication. And even more unusual it was that his kindnesses seemed to be just as available to strangers as to closer acquaintances. It is always a privilege to know such men, and a real loss not to have had the opportunity of acquaintance.

NO DOUBT the museums will always be concerned primarily with the preservation of organic remains, and hence will be dealing with morphological material. And so Dr. Stone was perhaps justified in taking exception (*Auk*, L, April, 1933, p. 251) to our rather sweeping comparison between modern morphological and physiological research (WILSON BULLETIN, XLIV, p. 231). Nevertheless, we do think that physiological researches are at present in the ascendency. And we believe that this is true not only in ornithology but throughout the entire range of zoology. This view will probably be easily verified by perusal of the zoological programs at any recent A. A. A. S. meeting. And in the ornithological field alone we may point to the work of Lillie and his colleagues in Illinois on feather pigmentation; and to the work of Miller in California on the same subject; to the work of Baldwin and his colleagues in Ohio on temperature; to the work of Shaver and his colleagues in Tennessee on bird song; to mention only a few of the more recent publications. The whole subject of territory behavior is wide open. Mrs. Nice's work on territory habit in Song Sparrows and other phases of behavior is another example. Perhaps most of the problems which are being solved by the aid of the bird banding method should be classified under the broad head of physiology.