

THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Many of our Wilson Club members keep records of their field trips for birds and take notes on their observations of behavior, habits, ecological relationships, and other aspects of bird-life. In respect to these tasks, the following question occurs to me: Are the records and notes being carefully organized and conveniently filed for immediate reference? Or, to put the question another way: Are the notes and records being accumulated in such a manner as to make them useful not only to persons performing the tasks, but also to persons who may eventually have access to them?

No two ornithologists hold identical interests; it can, therefore, be expected that their records and notes are slanted in different directions. Basically, however, their information must be accumulated and kept in a systematic fashion, if it is to be of lasting value. Let me point out the methods of two ornithologists well known to this organization.

Mr. Ludlow Griscom is engaged in the study of bird distribution, migration, and populations. While on field trips he is constantly looking for evidences and explanations of range extensions, migration irregularities, population increases and declines, and seasonal variations. He has a daily record book in which he enters the temperature, wind velocity, and sky conditions of each day, whether it is a field trip day or not. Thus he can quickly reconstruct the weather history of a particular season. In this same book he also enters a brief account of each field trip, the list of birds seen, and careful counts, or estimates, of the number of individuals of each species. In addition, Mr. Griscom has a series of loose-leaf ledgers in which all North American birds are arranged in phylogenetic order. In it, his observations are recorded under each species by year and states. From these ledgers it is a simple matter to obtain the data for any particular species or area that interests him at the moment.

Dr. George Miksch Sutton, being a bird artist, is constantly studying the attitudes and behavior of birds; furthermore, he is always observing the habits and ecological relationships of birds in specific localities. When working in the field he keeps a journal in which, at each day's conclusion, he notes significant weather conditions, gives descriptions of the area covered, and puts down his impressions of habitat relationships. He also has at hand a loose-leaf notebook, one page to a species, arranged in chronological order (*i.e.*, the order in which each species is first seen). After each day's trip, he goes through the notebook, writing down the number of individuals of each species counted and giving terse accounts of nests, their contents and location, of flight peculiarities, of songs and call notes, of feeding habits, of defensive reactions, of instances of predation. When Dr. Sutton is through working in the field and returns to his office, the journal is filed away by year, but the loose-leaf notebook is treated differently. Species pages are rearranged in phylogenetic order, numbered, and indexed. The species pages are then disassembled and filed in folders, one to a species; the index is placed in a folder with indices from earlier notebooks. This system keeps together in one folder all species data gathered by him through the years, while at the same time permitting, by means of the indices, the reassembling of species pages resulting from a particular trip.

I sincerely hope that Wilson Club members handle their records and notes in an equally efficient manner so that the information will be useful to them in their lifetimes and to future bird students. William Brewster, one of America's greatest ornithologists, painstakingly obtained and methodically preserved a mass of information on the New England birds of his day. Now long after his death, we have an accurate, readily available picture of an avifauna that has since become modified.

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