

Wildlife Conservation Committee: Robert A. McCabe, Chairman. Members to be announced later.

Committee on Arrangements for the 1951 meeting in Davenport, Iowa: Fred T. Hall, Chairman. Members to be announced later.

Representative on the Council of the American Ornithologists' Union: Burt L. Monroe

Representative on the Council of the American Association for the

Advancement of Science: S. Charles Kendeigh

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ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

LISTA DE LAS AVES DE VENEZUELA CON SU DISTRIBUCION. Parte 2. Passeriformes. By William H. Phelps and William H. Phelps, Jr. Bulletin of the Venezuelan Society of Natural Sciences, Vol. 12, No. 75, 1950: 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ in., 427 pp., with large folded map indicating the more than 350 localities mentioned. Paper. Bs. 10. Obtainable from La Sociedad Venezolana de Ciencias Naturales, Avenida Carabobo, Caracas, Venezuela. Send \$3.00 in personal check on a U. S. bank, or an international money order.

Ornithologists interested in the taxonomy, nomenclature and distribution of Venezuelan birds have not, up to the present, had a definitive work for reference. Adolf Ernst's "Catálogo sistemático de las especies de aves que han sido observadas hasta ahora en los Estados Unidos de Venezuela," listing 315 genera and 556 species, and published in 1877, has not been easily obtainable. Such general works as "The Birds of South America," by Brabourne and Chubb, and the Chicago (Field) Museum of Natural History's "Catalogue of Birds of the Americas and the Adjacent Islands," begun in 1918 by Charles B. Cory and continued by Charles E. Hellmayr and Boardman Conover, have of course been useful, but the Venezuelan material has not been readily separable from the rest. Two papers in English, one by Alexander Wetmore (1939), "Observations on the Birds of Northern Venezuela," the other by Herbert Friedmann and Foster D. Smith, Jr. (1950), "A Contribution to the Ornithology of Northeastern Venezuela" (respectively Nos. 3073 and 3268, *Proc. U. S. Natl. Mus.* 87: 173-260 and 100: 411-538), have served to focus attention upon Venezuela, but they have not dealt with the country as a whole. In addition there have been, within the past decade or so, numerous reports in Spanish, among them "Aves de la Ribera Colombiana del Río Negro (Frontera de Colombia y Venezuela)," by Armando Dugand and William H. Phelps (1948. *Caldasia*, 5: 225-245), and "Las Aves de Perija," by William H. Phelps (1944. *Bol. Soc. Venez. Ciencias Naturales*, 56, pp. 265-338). Briefer papers, principally descriptions of new forms or annotated lists dealing with circumscribed areas such as islands off the north coast of Venezuela, have continued to appear both in English and in Spanish. Through this considerable mass of material everyone has come to realize that the Venezuelan Society of Natural Sciences, and especially William H. Phelps and his son, William H. Phelps, Jr., have been diligent in their study of Venezuelan birds.

"Lista de las Aves de Venezuela con su Distribución" is the culmination of all this effort. It represents numerous expeditions to little known parts of the country, preservation and identification of large numbers of specimens, visits to all the major museums of North America, correspondence with European ornithologists, and exhaustive study of the literature. Part 2, now before us, is admirably thoroughgoing and thoughtfully presented. As the title indicates,

this part deals only with passerine birds. Part 1, covering the non-passerines, is to appear later. For each form discussed the scientific name, Spanish vernacular name, and full reference to the original description are given. A synonymy is included only when the type localities involved are Venezuelan. Statements of range are primarily geographical, though mention of zones and elevations hints of ecology. For forms which also inhabit other countries or parts of countries, brief over-all range-statements are given. Of special value is the listing in boldface type of localities represented by specimens in the Phelps Collection.

For many North American readers, the introduction will be of special interest and value. Here are listed, in tabular form, 56 species and subspecies which migrate to or through Venezuela, spending only part of the year there; 8 Colombian forms which are known to occur near the Venezuelan border and which therefore probably inhabit Venezuela also; 87 forms not previously reported from Venezuela; and 107 additional forms described as new from Venezuelan specimens in the Phelps Collection. The 56 migrants are preponderantly species and subspecies which breed in the United States and Canada, 44 of them being such familiar birds as the Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*), Purple Martin (*Progne subis*), Veery (*Hylocichla fuscescens*), Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*), Black and White Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*), Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*), Summer Tanager (*Piranga rubra*), and Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*), to name one species from each family represented. The Scarlet Tanager (*Piranga olivacea*), surprisingly enough, is missing from the list. It has never been recorded in Venezuela. The Fork-tailed Flycatcher (*Muscivora tyrannus*), which ranges, according to the A.O.U. Check-List (p. 203) from southern Mexico to Patagonia, breeds locally in Venezuela in the tropical zone.

An important table shows that 25 passerine families, 317 passerine genera, and 689 passerine species of birds are known to inhabit Venezuela. Of these not one genus is exclusively Venezuelan, but 31 species are. This is not the place for a lengthy discussion, or even a listing, of these species, of course, but it is interesting to note (a) that they represent only eight families—the Furnariidae or Ovenbirds, the Formicariidae or Ant-Shrikes, the Cotingidae or Cotingas, the Tyrannidae or Tyrant Flycatchers, the Coerebidae or Honey Creepers, the Parulidae or Wood Warblers, the Thraupidae or Tanagers, and the Fringillidae or Finches; and (b) that only one of these eight families, the Fringillidae, is common to the New World and the Old. Considering how sedentary many wrens are, it is a little surprising that Venezuela has no endemic troglodytid. The same might be said for other families as well. If, as recent investigations indicate, the Honey Creepers actually belong to the Parulidae, then Venezuela, with its seven endemic Wood Warblers (three of the genus *Diglossa*, 3 of the genus *Myioborus*, and 1 of the genus *Basileuterus*) must be considered a speciation center for that highly interesting family.

The carefully prepared index and the map with its accompanying list of place-names are invaluable. The printing, unfortunately, is not all that could be wished for. Proof has obviously been read with great care, but some words on almost every page, especially italicized words, are hard to read because of the poor type.—George Miksch Sutton.

FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY FIRST ANNUAL REPORT 1949. George Waterston and Sons, Ltd., Printers, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1949: 5½ × 8½ in., 31 pp., 19 photos, 1 map on back cover. Paper. 2s 6d.

On June 1, 1948, Mr. Kenneth Williamson made his first visit to Fair Isle, located midway between the Orkney and Shetland Islands, in order to organize and direct the work of a bird observatory. The two-fold objective was to obtain data on the migration and the breeding behaviour of birds. The energy and enthusiasm of Mr. Williamson have produced remarkable results during the short span of this endeavor. Four abandoned Royal Navy Detachment huts were reconditioned for living quarters and a laboratory and bird traps were erected during the

first winter. The first observations on migration were commenced on April 14, 1949. A reading of the brief statement of the aims of the Fair Isle Bird Observatory does not prepare one for the wealth of information to be found in this excellent progress report. "The purpose of the Bird Observatory is to provide facilities for visitors to carry out scientific research on the island, not only in the sphere of ornithology, but in every aspect of Natural History."

One is impressed not only by the data on migration already obtained, but also by the scope of the projects planned for the future. The highlights of both spring and fall migration in 1949 are presented, including several noteworthy records. For example, an influx of Snipe (*Capella gallinago*), Redshanks (*Tringa erythropus*), and Redwings (*Turdus musicus*) was noted on the night of October 20-21. An analysis of trapped Redwings showed them to be of the Iceland race, *T. m. coburni* Sharpe. The first large scale invasion since 1935 of the Northern Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major major*) occurred in September and October. All were birds of the year. In the first full season's work, six new species were added to the Fair Isle bird list, bringing the total to 298 forms. The six additions were: Black-browed Albatross (*Diomedea melanophrys*), Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), Spotted Crake (*Porzana porzana*), Nightingale (*Luscinia megarhyncha*), Greenish Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochiloides viridanus*), and Pallas's Grasshopper-Warbler (*Locustella certhiola*).

A section on the "Behaviour of Migrants" discusses briefly certain open-country species and the Great Spotted Woodpecker. An insight into the adaptive ability of birds in unusual habitats is given in a discussion of these woodpeckers. "In the absence of trees, they hammered vigorously at the telephone poles, clothes-posts and the long lines of fencing-posts, feeding in characteristic fashion." Two birds were found in a dying condition with no recognizable food-remains in their gizzards. At least two birds, however, were still present in December and were "spending most of their time in the stack-yards where the traditional hammering action of the bill has been adapted to the task of removing the grain from its husk."

The laboratory routine for trapped birds includes weighing, plumage studies and the collection of external parasites. The weights of over 300 Rock Pipits (*Anthus spinoletta petrosus*) taken at various hours of the day from late June to November indicate a probable sexual difference in weight. "Wing-length provides an indication of sex in this species, and it has been found that those with wings over 90 mm. long are, on the average, 3 g. heavier than those with wings under 88 mm." It was found, also, that Redwings averaged 22.3 g. lighter in weight during the fall migration than in the spring migration. A careful check of trapped birds has added information on external parasites. A new tick for Britain, *Hyalomma marginatum balcanicum*, was taken from a Rose-colored Pastor (*Pastor roseus*), and two new hosts for hippoboscids flies were discovered: (1) *Ornithomyia avicularia* from a Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*), and (2) *O. fringillina* from a young Arctic Skua or Parasitic Jaeger (*Stercorarius parasiticus*). In hope of making precise descriptions of color differences between populations of the same species, a Lovibond-Schofield colorimeter is to be installed. If successful, the use of such an instrument will give a numerical reading for fine gradations in plumage-tints.

An enlightening section is presented on the recognition of 'rarities.' The philosophy at the Observatory concerning stragglers and accidentals differs strikingly from that of many ornithological circles: e.g., the rare warblers were not collected. In denying the necessity for such collecting at a modern field-study station, Mr. Williamson states: "It may be less satisfactory that an important record should rest on the deposition of a few observers, but against this must be set the important gain that these few observers are presented with a unique opportunity in field-work. They enjoy a few hours intensive training as a team,—hours which call for patient concentration on the job of observing and noting down details of plumage, habits and behaviour, and of analysing these for the all-important 'field-characters' (often so imperfectly known) likely to assist other observers in years to come." Photographs revealing details of wing-formula (e.g., of the Greenish Warbler, pl. 13) and other diagnostic characters were taken as permanent records of occurrence.

A progress report is given on long term studies on the breeding birds of the island, with special reference to the Arctic Skua, Great Skua (*Catharacta skua*), and Oyster-catcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*). The types of traps used and the success of each are discussed. A summary of the 1,793 birds ringed [banded] in 1949 and the fall of 1948 is included. The report is well illustrated with photographs of the island, traps and techniques employed.

The report admirably illustrates the results obtainable from concerted effort in ornithological studies. It should be a stimulus to all groups interested in the manifold problems of bird migration. Visitors are welcome at the station and accommodations are available for ten observers. Further information may be obtained by writing the Director, Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust, 17 India Street, Edinburgh, Scotland.—Andrew J. Berger.

NORTH AMERICAN WATERFOWL. By Albert M. Day. Stackpole and Heck, Inc., New York and Harrisburg, 1949: xx + 329 pp., 68 half-tones, 55 pen and ink cuts, 1 color plate. \$4.75.

This book aims to solicit the wildfowler's help and interest through simple, patient explanation of the problems at hand and of the work that is being done to manage waterfowl as a harvestable resource. The book opens with a discussion of the reckless wildfowling of the past, then describes the steps taken to stem this heavy kill through protective legislation. This part of the story has been told many times over, of course; but here it is used as the required introduction to the main theme of the book: the modern program for the management of waterfowl. The precepts upon which the modern management program operates are set forth. Detailed discussions are given of the work of the law enforcement groups, the sanctuaries, the refuge program, the plan for waterfowl research, and the Pittman-Robertson program. There is a chapter on *State Activities* which we wish could have gone into more detail regarding the growing interest of the various states in the waterfowl program. The old attitude that responsibility for waterfowl management rests mainly with the federal government is gradually giving way to the modern plan wherein state and federal offices more equally share work and interest. There is one chapter on *Waterfowl Conservation in Canada*, mostly a brief historical record; and another chapter discusses *The Mexican Waterfowl Situation*, dealing at some length with first-hand observations of wildfowling in that country.

As with all "popular" books, the specialist sometimes does not have to read deeply to find a point or two he feels he might contest—not on accuracy but on the point of some incompleteness of treatment. I was disappointed in the chapter on wildlife research because it did not record some of the most important items that are now being studied. But I cast aside all doubts of the author's grasp on this topic when I came upon several sentences which are among the most important in the book. Mr. Day recognized the lag in wildlife research when he said (p. 203): "We have been slower in developing scientific techniques for the proper utilization and protection of our natural resources than we have in industrial fields." And he gives a solemn commitment for the future program when he writes: "Wildlife research must be a continuing function because conditions are ever changing as the pattern of land and water uses are altered. Answers obtained 20 years ago may not suit present-day needs" (p. 213). Those who have followed the work of the Fish and Wildlife Service during the last four years know of the great advancement in the Service's research program, particularly in the approach to waterfowl problems; and there is ample witness to the fact that the so-called "basic concept" of the 1930's is valued only as it measures up to modern observations.

The book is attractive in make-up and its value to many readers will be greatly increased by the many lively pen and ink drawings by Bob Hines. Among the many half-tones illustrating the work of the waterfowl program, there are included reproductions of all of the duck stamps since the first issue.—Albert Hochbaum.