

EDITORIAL

There is a good deal of complaining these days about changes in scientific names. One person is annoyed because, having just learned to spell and pronounce a considerable number of these names, he finds that some of them are no longer applicable. Another complains because the "new name someone has dug up" doesn't describe the bird as well as the "old one" did. Often, in cases of this sort, the "new" name is actually the older of the two, but that is beside the point. Many bird students, among them some avowed taxonomists, feel that names now widely in use should arbitrarily be declared adequate so as to have done with all this haggling as to whether a given early description is adequate or not.

Admittedly there is such a thing as devoting too much time and too many pages to arguments that get us nowhere. But the careful translation of early writings, the study of early drawings, the discovery that certain of these are full evidence that the writer was naming and describing a bird for the first time—this branch of ornithology can be interesting and exciting indeed. We submit that it is also important, that it should continue as part of man's pursuit of knowledge.

In the June issue of *The Wilson Bulletin*, on page 113, a footnote dealing with the correct scientific name for the Iceland Gull appeared. Let no one think that that footnote was added casually. Writing it involved not only a careful translation of the Mayaud article referred to, but also the borrowing from distant libraries of the works of both Vieillot and Meyer and then more translation. Photostatic copies of the pertinent pages were made for reference, and these were added to our species-files. The translation of Vieillot's description clearly showed that the bird he was calling *leucopterus* was a Glaucous Gull, not alone because its total length was too great for an Iceland Gull, but also because the *Larus glaucus* of his discussion was a bird whose wings were "*versus apicem nigricantibus*"—black at the tips. Vieillot's description of *leucopterus* was, in other words, of the bird we know as the Glaucous Gull, the large white-winged gull of the north.

Larus glaucoides, as described in Meyer's work (1822), is clearly of the right size for an Iceland Gull. Indeed, the description is in every way adequate except that the adjective *schmüstigweiss*, describing the remiges, does not seem quite accurate. Now it remains for some careful student to ascertain exactly what was meant by the adjective *schmüstigweiss*, or exactly why the word was used. In any event, we submit, the inquiry should not stop here, but go right on, until we have the most precise knowledge possible as to what the earliest name-plus-adequate-description of the Iceland Gull is.

Let those who feel that they cannot go to the trouble of learning these "new" names bear in mind that every ornithologist, whether he sets out to do so or not, knows many names of various sorts for most of the birds he knows at all. As children some of us felt that there was really no such bird as a water ousel; the bird was the *water ousel* or *dipper*, and the four words were requisite. Some of us can easily think back from *Pheucticus* to *Hedymeles* and then to *Zamelodia* and even to *Habia* as part of our personal experience with the Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and the bird is no less beautiful, the study of ornithology no less appealing, on that account. The human brain was made for work. Let us go right on finding these correct early names and memorizing them as occasion demands. As one of our leading ornithologists, in a personal letter written not long ago, said: "I don't think there is a taxonomist worth his salt in this country today who doesn't have to have two or three names in his head for a species, so why not use the earliest valid name and be done with it?"

Why not indeed? Kenneth Parkes (1951. *Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington*, 64: 61) has just made the interesting discovery that Wagler's name *Eudocimus*, published in 1832, is an adequate name for the genus to which the White and Scarlet Ibises belong. This name antedates *Guara* of Reichenbach by twenty years. So now we have the pleasant task of learning the

names *Eudocimus albus* and *Eudocimus ruber*—thus seeing old friends in a new light, so to speak. We might even get busy and ascertain what *Eudocimus* means, thus finding out whether Wagler, in his day, was using the human brain to capacity.—G.M.S.

The writings of the late Bayard Henderson Christy, editor for many years of the distinguished regional periodical, *The Cardinal*, were notable for their literary flavor. A few of his papers were published in *The Wilson Bulletin*, among them one entitled "Beach-Combers," which appeared in December, 1935 (47: 265-269). The Carnegie Museum has several dozen reprints of this article, as well as of "Bird Notes from Southern Florida" and "A Wading Bird Rookery," both of which appeared in 1928 (*Auk*, 45: 283-289 and 423-429, respectively). Copies of these reprints will be sent, as long as they last, to anyone sending a stamped, addressed 7½ x 10½ clasp envelope. Mail your request to the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh 13, Pennsylvania.

In pursuit of data concerning the Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*), Dr. Lawrence H. Walkinshaw, of Battle Creek, Michigan, recently visited Cuba and the Isle of Pines. He was absent from the United States from April 20 to May 15. On the Isle of Pines he discovered three crane nests. While in Cuba he and another member of The Wilson Ornithological Club, Dr. Abelardo Moreno, who is working on a book dealing with Cuban birds, visited the state of Pinar del Rio, at the western end of the island, and the famous Zapata Swamp. They did not see those interesting endemics, *Ferminia*, *Cyanolimnas*, and *Torreornis*, however.

The museum of the Ross County Historical Society has recently purchased over 700 negative photostats made under the direction of the New York Public Library from illustrations of birds in flight appearing in rare old books. Those interested in seeing or using this valuable collection should get in touch with Eugene D. Rigney, Director of the Ross County Historical Society, 45 West Fifth Street, Chillicothe, Ohio.

Milton B. Trautman, Research Associate at the Franz Theodore Stone Institute of Hydrobiology, Ohio State University, Put-in-Bay, Ohio, and widely known for his scholarly "The Birds of Buckeye Lake, Ohio," was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Science by the College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio, on June 11. Dr. Trautman has been devoting much time recently to completing a book on the fishes of Ohio. He has been illustrating this work as well as writing it. His drawings are notable for their great accuracy and precision of detail.

We deeply regret an error in the March, 1951, issue of the *Bulletin*. The genotype of the third bird from the bottom (CNMH 148778) in the colored frontispiece should read WwSpp, not WwSsPP as stated in the legend at the bottom of page 5.

We are grateful to Katherine Tousey for the excellent snapshot of Ludlow Griscom. The picture is remarkable in that it has caught its subject in such a sedentary pose. The building up of unusually large life-lists obviously is not wholly a matter of climbing cliffs, wallowing through marshes, and stalking wide plains.

Many members of the Club have contributed to the color plate fund. Some did so through purchasing prints of the Crimson-collared Grosbeak plate which appeared in the December, 1950, issue. Others gave money with the expressed wish that it be used in any way that seemed best to the editors. The following contributed: Malvina Trussell, Irving E. Hampe, Jack Satterly, Margaret Morse Nice, Virginia Cavendish (deceased), S. W. Witmer, Dr. and Mrs. Powell Cottrille, Eugene Eisenmann, Betty Stephens, Amelia R. Laskey, Mrs. M. J.

Beemer, Theodora Nelson, Clarence B. Randall, Ben Coffey, Winnifred Smith, Herbert L. Stoddard, Sr., Paul S. Martin, Robert B. Lea, Mrs. Barbara Westphal, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Graber, H. Lewis Batts, Jr., Wilson Schramm, and Earl W. Farmer.

M. Graham Netting, Assistant Director of the Carnegie Museum, was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Science by Waynesburg College, Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, on April 27, 1950. Dr. Netting has been a member of The Wilson Ornithological Club since 1941.

In response to the report on "Graduate Research in Ornithology," which appeared in the March issue of the *Bulletin*, Clarence Cottam, Assistant Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, has sent the editors a mimeographed list of ornithological studies being conducted at 16 Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit schools. A limited supply of this excellent summary of current research on game species is available for distribution. A copy may be obtained by writing to the Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington 25, D. C.

The engraving for the Wilson's Warbler color-plate appearing in this issue of the *Bulletin* was donated by Mr. Samuel A. Grimes of the Respass-Grimes Engraving Company of Jacksonville, Florida. The editors, in behalf of The Wilson Ornithological Club, wish to express their appreciation to Mr. Grimes and his company for their generosity in providing this fine frontispiece.

Frank A. Pitelka, Henry E. Childs, and Gilbert S. Greenwald, of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, have initiated studies of three common birds—Alaska Longspur, Snow Bunting and Red Phalarope—at the Arctic Research Laboratory, Point Barrow, Alaska. The objective is to gather comparative data on population numbers, breeding success, and various aspects of behavior with relation to the far northern environment. Barrow is at 71°N. latitude and has continuous daylight throughout the nesting season.

We are sorry to report an error in Founder Reuben M. Strong's biographical sketch which appeared in the June issue of the *Bulletin*. Dr. Strong was President, not Vice-President, of The Wilson Ornithological Club from 1894 to 1901. He also was a Member of the American Ornithologists' Union from 1903 until being elected a Fellow in 1949.

The editors are grateful to the following for assistance in preparing for publication the material appearing in this issue: Patsy Belle Bateman, William Brudon, Irving Burr, Richard Fischer, Theodore Hubbell, John F. Kent, William A. Lunk, Margaret Morse Nice, and Hugo Schroder. They are especially grateful to Elsa Hertz for her generous secretarial assistance.