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BULLETIN

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NUMBER 8

AUGUST MEETING: The next regular meeting of the Association will be held on Thursday evening, 10th inst., at eight o'clock, in the Assembly Hall of the Public Library, corner McAllister and Larkin Sts. Take elevator to third floor. Car lines No. 5 or No. 19.

The evening will be spent in comparing reports of vacation observations. Many of our members have enjoyed exceptional opportunities and it is hoped that one and all will come prepared to recount their experiences. Please bring vacation lists, with localities and species noted and your name signed to same, for filing with the secretary.

On this occasion, we hope to have with us Mr. Clark Blickensderfer, who has kindly consented to attend, if he is still in the city, and let us examine his notable collection of photographs of various Colorado birds and to tell us something of his experiences in taking them.



AUGUST FIELD TRIP will be taken on Sunday, August 13th, to Point Bonita, Fort Barry and Rodeo Lagoon. At the lighthouse are often encountered off-shore birds. The list will not be large, but the scenery is beautiful and the trip exceedingly interesting. Take Sausalito Ferry, 8:15 a. m. Purchase round-trip tickets to Sausalito. Bring canteens and lunch.

Route will be over the shore road to Fort Baker and Battery Spencer and thence by trail overlooking the ocean to the Point, a distance of about six miles, each way. Leaders, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas.



A very special trip is also being planned for the following week and it is hoped that announcement can be made at the meeting on Thursday.



FIELD IDENTIFICATION OF BIRDS

An exceedingly interesting paper on the above subject was read by Mr. Ludlow Griscom before the meeting of the A. O. U. in Philadelphia in November last, and printed in *The Auk*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 1, January, 1922. Its careful perusal would greatly benefit each and every of our field-faring members, and it will serve admirably to promote a better understanding of the limitations governing such identifications, of the attendant difficulties and the means of overcoming them, and of the attitude necessarily assumed by the scientist who has to pass upon the validity of sight records.

The amateur has a well defined field of useful activity. Happy is he who can recognize it. Mr. Griscom defines it clearly, thus: "It is a waste of time to discuss the importance and necessity of sight identifications when it comes to studying habits, life-histories, migration, and local or detailed

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distribution. Here where we are dealing with the usual and the average, the normal rather than the exceptional, one record can check another. The cumulative value of the data collected under these heads by amateur students all over the country is too well known and obvious to require elaboration. Yet before I pass on to my main theme I should like to express my own sense of indebtedness to these bird lovers, who make no claim to being scientific ornithologists, but without whom our knowledge of American birds could not have reached its present development. My reason for wishing to make this acknowledgment of their assistance as full and complete as possible is that I am going to show that, by the very nature of the laws of evidence, this same help cannot be extended by the amateur observer to so great an extent in the determination of the abnormal and exceptional. The failure to recognize this distinction is, I believe, the cause of the only point of friction that disturbs the good relations between the professional and the amateur in our subject; * * * "

Discussing the birds which it is possible to identify satisfactorily in the field, Mr. Griscom lists some twenty forms practically impossible, and about thirty more which can be identified by trained ornithologists only under very favorable circumstances. Outside of these lists, doubtful records of Eastern residents and regular visitants are due to the defects of the individual student. These defects are assigned by Mr. Griscom to four categories, *viz.*

- a. Physical defects of eye and ear.
- b. Natural inaptitude for the study.
- c. Mental attitude of the observer.
- d. Ignorance and lack of study.

and he considers the last the most important and wide-spread defect, and responsible for almost all mis-identifications by bird-students.

Considering the mental processes pursued by scientific ornithologists who must pass upon the validity of sight records, Mr. Griscom cites the following criteria as determining the reliability of an observer whose reputation has not been previously established:

1. Is the observer thoroughly familiar with the birds of his locality? Was he aware of the importance of his observations?
2. Did he ever see the bird before?
3. Does he know the species with which it could be confused?
4. Does his account show that the circumstances of the observation were thoroughly satisfactory?
5. Did he recognize the bird at once, or did he have to look it up later?"

"As the ornithologist is responsible for the accuracy of what he publishes, it is *absolutely necessary* for him to reject any sight record of a bird known to be difficult to distinguish unless *every one* of these questions can be satisfactorily answered."

"Failure to understand the reasonableness and justice of these questions which the editor asks himself, is proof positive that the mental attitude of the student is wrong, and that it is unscientific, which must always render his records liable to suspicion and subject to careful scrutiny."

The following program is suggested by Mr. Griscom for the development of an appropriate mental attitude:

"(1) Do not fail to recognize that the professional ornithologist knows more about the subject than you do.

(2) Do not tell a critic that you have studied birds for twenty-five years. You have not and he knows it. You have been interested in birds for twenty-five years, but you have studied them in a part of your spare time only.

(3) Do not try to argue yourself into a reputation as an expert. It is a matter of fact, not of argument. The professional must also be allowed some time to find it out. He has no psychic powers.

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(4) Remember that the true ornithologist is pleased when another recruit joins the ranks. If he doubts your record, it is not because he is trying to down you, or to get rid of a dangerous rival.

(5) Unfavorable criticism, even if occasionally undeserved, is one of the best incentives to learning a subject well. The more you dislike it, the more likely you will be to take the steps necessary to make its repetition impossible. Merely getting hurt or sore will not help at all. * * *"

We will conclude these brief excerpts with Mr. Griscom's suggestions of the qualifications for a trained field ornithologist:

"(1) First and most important, the student should learn *by heart* the published information on the birds of his locality. He should be able to give his 'local list' from memory, and should know the status and seasonal occurrence of each species. This will teach him what to expect, and he will immediately recognize the abnormal or the unusual as such. If there be no published information, he should study the published information of all the territory adjacent to his.

(2) Next, commit the diagnostic characters of every species in the local list to memory. Get a mental image of what is to be seen. * * * If possible, a museum should be visited and bird skins examined. This is the best way of acquiring a clear mental picture.

(3) Next, get out in the field and learn to know the birds of your locality well. The length of time this will take is naturally a question of the amount of time available for field work, but ten years is a safe estimate. * * *

(4) Above all, the student should cultivate the scientific attitude of mind, and he should never believe in his infallibility. The beginner's notebook is all question marks. The student who is beginning to know birds really well often has no question marks. The notebook of the trained ornithologist always has many question marks, until death closes the notebook."

This is strong meat for amateurs, but very nourishing and salutary.

* * *

HOW I MADE FRIENDS WITH THE BIRDS

In the early Spring of 1912 we moved from the city to our home in West Seattle, taking with us our household pet,—a large gray cat. Ours was the only house in the block of the new Addition and was nearly surrounded by trees. I noticed at once that there were many birds in the neighborhood and, unfortunately, the cat noticed it too, and there was where my troubles began, for I loved the birds and the cat as well. I tried to keep him in the house, but the moment he went outside, he was after the birds. When I heard them chirping and calling, I would go and bring him in and it was surprising how quickly the birds learned that I would come when I heard their cries of distress.

I watched them closely and as soon as one bird would see the cat, it would sound the note of alarm and then a number of them would take up the cry and fly around my door or window until I came out. Then off they would go and I would follow them as they flew from branch to branch of tree or tall fern until they would lead me to the spot where the cat was hidden away in the thick growth. I have followed them thus, sometimes for more than two blocks, and they never failed to locate the cat. Back again they would follow me, as I carried the cat and would keep up their chirping till I took him into the house. Then they would disperse and quiet reigned once more.

We finally disposed of the cat, but I had established my friendship with the birds and they became so tame that they would come to the window and eat while I stood close by and some would take the food from my hand. The

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interest thus developed has grown steadily since that time and I have had other wonderful and delightful experiences with them.

MRS. J. A. UNSWORTH.

* * *

JULY FIELD TRIP was taken on Sunday, July 16th, to Golden Gate Park. Starting, as usual, at the north end of the Chain-of-Lakes, we traversed the shores to Lincoln Way. The phoebe was there and its nest, but the family had been raised and the nest had survived its usefulness. Young coots were observed in almost every stage of development, while one enthusiastic female was busily tearing off tules and building a nest.

Then we came to the buffalo paddock, with its reconstructed fence, and regrets were loudly expressed for the departed posts with hollow centers, where the chickadees delighted to raise their broods. Buffalo calves and a spindly elk calf held our attention for awhile, but the paddock was bare of birds.

Spreckels Lake came next and here we were joined by two guests who had been looking for us at Third Ave. by mistake. Thence the party wandered to Lloyd and Stow Lakes, reaching the Japanese tea garden about two o'clock for lunch. In the meanwhile, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas were seeking us about the plaza, in vain.

Three of the party, leaving for home, were seized with a notion to inspect the beach, but the rocks around the Cliff House furnished the only additions to the list for the day. Numbers of cormorants were still nesting on the highest rock; a group of non-breeding California gulls were lazing around on another and a number of Western gulls were holding forth on the point adjacent to the Sutro baths. A few sea lions of large size were lounging on another rock, but no females nor young were in evidence. A young murre was struggling to get out to sea through the heavy surf.

Counting those who were early, those who went astray for awhile and those who were in the park trying to join the party, the number was ten,—Miss Cassidy, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas and Mr. and Mrs. Kibbe. As guests, Mrs. J. M. Levy, Miss Levy, Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Unsworth and Mr. L. A. Elmore. Five members and five guests.

Birds encountered in the park, on the beach and the bay, were: Pied-billed grebe, California murre, western, California and Heermann gulls; cormorants, mallard, scaup, and ruddy ducks; coots, sandpipers, quail and kingfisher; flicker, Allen hummer, black phoebe, western fly-catcher and Brewer blackbird; purple finch, linnnet, green-backed gold-finch, Nuttall sparrow and junco; song sparrow, San Francisco towhee, Hutton vireo, yellow warbler, salt marsh yellowthroat and golden pileolated warbler; Vigors and house wrens, chickadee, bush-tit, russet-backed thrush and robin. Thirty five species in all.

A. S. KIBBE.

AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

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