

University of Michigan on June 24th. Addresses will be made by Dr. W. T. Harris, U. S. Commissioner of Education, and Prof. J. O. Murray, of Princeton University.

THE University of Nebraska holds a summer school at Lincoln, from June 8th to July 3d, intended especially for teachers, principals and superintendents of the State. The courses of special interest to students of science are those offered in botany by Prof. Bessey and in physics by Prof. Brace. It is the intention of the University to offer next year courses in those subjects omitted this year. Thus, in 1897 zoölogy and chemistry will probably be offered in the place of botany and physics.

THE Board of Overseers of Harvard University have elected Theobald Smith, M. D., professor of comparative pathology; Charles Hubert Moore, A. M., professor of arts and director of the Fogg Art Museum; Lewis Jerome Johnson, A. B., C. E., assistant professor of civil engineering, and Comfort Avery Adams, Jr., S. B., assistant professor of electrical engineering.

OF the ten fellows nominated by the faculty of the University of Wisconsin only one is in the pure sciences—C. H. Bunting in biology.

PROF. W. WHITMAN BAILEY, of Brown University, has been appointed by President Cleveland, a member of the Board of Visitors to the United States Military Academy at West Point, where, it will be remembered, his father was many years professor, and where he himself was born February 22, 1843.

DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE.

'PROGRESS IN AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGY,
1886-95.'

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: In the *American Naturalist* for May, of the present year, there appeared a contribution of mine entitled 'Progress in American Ornithology, 1886-95,' and in a recent issue of SCIENCE (No. 73, pp. 777-779) Dr. J. A. Allen has undertaken to reply to such parts of that article as he considers to be of a critical nature as applying to the Committee of the American Ornithologist's Union, which prepared the last edition of the 'Check List of North American Birds.' In the

present rejoinder I beg to assure my distinguished reviewer, at the outstart, that my article in the *American Naturalist* was not prompted through a spirit of 'animus,' as he seems to think, and that my 'reference to the startling clearly reveals that animus' is, surely, too ridiculous to be entertained even for a moment. Dr. Allen charges me with having overlooked 'the main purpose of the new Check List, which was the revision of the matter relating to the geographical distribution of the species and subspecies.' This omission was entirely intentional upon my part, and I preferred to leave it to other and more competent reviewers who have kept pace with that division of the subject during the last ten years, and who are for that reason far better prepared to deal with it than I am, who have not made any special attempt in that direction. That I did not refer to the matter of geographical distribution is any evidence that I underrated its value is, to say the least, a curious inference. Upon similar grounds I might have been charged with underrating the value of certain technicalities in scientific nomenclature, and of the necessity of typographical precision in the new 'Check List,' for I had nothing to say about them, and intentionally so. Other reviewers will doubtless turn their attention to such matters, and for the enlightenment of the A. O. U. Committee, and the consequent progress of American ornithology, point out the shortcomings in these premises likewise. Indeed, in *The Nidologist* for April of this year, a very good step has been taken in this direction. Through the assistance of the review to which I refer, I am prepared to say that I feel I have quite as much right to allow *Burrica* to appear in my article as *Barrica*, to which Dr. Allen has invited my attention, as he and the A. O. U. Committee have to spell 'probably' 'propably,' or Greenland with three e's, as they have in the new Check List (pp. 221 and 321).

Dr. Allen has at last given to avian taxonomers a reason, the reason perhaps, why the A. O. U. Committee adhere so persistently to the superantiquated classification of birds to be found in the last Check List. It is because 'the species are numbered in an orderly sequence' and 'of the still very unsettled state of the sub-

ject of the relationships of various groups of birds.' If it is to be inferred from this that the Committee propose to adopt and print the classification of American birds in the various issues of the future Check Lists, that has just appeared in the last edition of that work, until such time as the relationship of the various groups of birds is *settled*, then I would most emphatically suggest that the idea of presenting a classification at all be at once abandoned and, for the 'convenience of correspondence between collectors,' simply print a 'list' of American birds, duly numbered in orderly sequence.

We might even carry the matter still further, and, as the scientific names of the birds are an abomination to the vast majority of 'collectors,' a 'list' of the vernacular names alone might be given, and these made alphabetical and duly 'numbered in orderly sequence.' What a simple science ornithology would become, and how convenient for the collector!

Now that Dr. Allen has had so much to say in his review about my 'presumptuous criticism,' and has totally ignored all the main points of my article in *The American Naturalist*, I should like to propose to him and to the A. O. U. Committee a few questions in reference to what we find in the new check list. I very much doubt their ability to answer them.

1. Upon what grounds are the Great Auk (*Plautus impennis*) and the Labrador Duck (*Camptolaimus labradorius*), both now admitted by the Committee to be *extinct*, retained in a list of *existing* North American birds?

2. Upon what grounds is *Crecooides osbornii* omitted from the List of Fossil Birds? (See Proc. Amer. Phil. Soc., v. xxx., p. 125.)

3. What consistency is there in admitting *Piranga rubiceps* to the list, and excluding (for one example among many) *Gubernatrix cristatellus*? [As the normal habitat of *P. rubiceps* is certain *high* altitudes of a few localities in Colombia and Ecuador (the species not even occurring upon the Isthmus of Panama, it would seem that Dr. Allen's comments on *Gubernatrix cristatellus* might, with equal consistency, be applied to it. Of the latter species he has said, "Its habitat being Brazil, it seems beyond probability that it could have reached the locality of its capture with-

out human aid." (Bull. N. O. C., Vol. V., p. 240.)].

4. Upon what grounds are the Grebes (*Podicipidæ*) made to occupy a sub-order by themselves, and the Loons (*Urinatoridæ*) and Auks (*Alcidæ*) another and separate sub-order?

5. What have the Goat-suckers (*Caprimulgi*) and the Humming-birds (*Trochili*) in common, that they should be placed in the same order?

When Dr. Allen answers these questions satisfactorily to the many inquiring ornithologists the world over, and can *prove* consistency in their premises, then I shall believe my article in *The American Naturalist* to have been 'presumptuous,' but not before.

R. W. SHUFELDT.

The foregoing rejoinder by Dr. Shufeldt to my review of his paper on the A. O. U. Check-List of North American Birds requires no comment from me as regards his article in general, as I do not recognize that he has scored any points worthy of notice; the series of four questions he asks at its close may be considered as demanding some attention. In regard to the article referred to by Dr. Shufeldt in *The Nidologist*, the leading points made by the writer thereof are not well taken, as will doubtless be shown in a future number of that journal. To place emphasis on the presence of two typographical errors—the extent apparently of their discoveries in this direction—as both writers have done, is rather a compliment than otherwise to the Committee.

1. The Great Auk and the Labrador Duck. Dr. Shufeldt raised the same issue in his original paper, but it did not seem necessary to take up the space of SCIENCE to discuss it. Both species are practically members of the present fauna, as distinguished from 'fossil birds,' commonly so called, the former living till about the middle of the present century (specimens were taken as late at least as 1844), and the latter till at least 1875, or till within twenty years, and not a few ornithologists believe that some may still exist. Both species are still retained in all recent manuals and general works on North American birds as properly 'North American Birds' in the sense of the Check List.

2. *Crecooides osbornii* Shufeldt. This was omitted simply because it was accidentally overlooked.

3. *Piranga 'rubiceps' = rubriceps*. If Dr. Shufeldt makes no protest against *Icterus icterus* and *Spinus notatus*, admitted to the list on Audubon's authority, he should not object to the case of *Piranga rubriceps*, the geographical conditions being similar. So far as known, *P. rubriceps* is not kept as a cage bird; certainly it is not one of the commoner cage birds of our bird stores, as is *Gubernatrix cristatellus*. Many of the common cage birds escape from confinement and are afterwards captured, perhaps after a considerable interval of freedom, and showing very few, if any, traces of previous confinement. Among them are finches, parrots, and parakeets from Africa, India, Australia and tropical America. Their capture may be recorded as a matter of interest, but no one considers it admissible to include such species in the list of North American birds. On the other hand, wild birds either wander or are carried by storms hundreds and even thousands of miles beyond their usual range, and are captured under circumstances which preclude the supposition of their being escaped cage birds, as in the case of many European stragglers that have occurred once, or a few times in North America. To this class of waifs belongs *Piranga rubriceps*.

4 and 5. Regarding the relationships of the Grebes, Loons, Auks, etc., probably if the A. O. U. Committee were to revise its classification they would make some changes in respect to the position of these groups; but, for reasons given in my former letter (SCIENCE, N. S., No. 73, May 22, 1896), the Committee did not consider it advisable to transpose any of the higher groups. But the Committee doubtless would not follow Dr. Shufeldt in removing the Owls from the Accipitres to place them with or near the Goatsuckers.

J. A. ALLEN.

'THE POLAR HARES OF EASTERN NORTH AMERICA.'—AN ANSWER TO DR. C. H.

MERRIAM'S CRITICISMS.

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: Dr. C. Hart Merriam has seen fit to devote nearly two pages

of SCIENCE* to my preliminary paper on the 'Polar Hares of Eastern North America.'

It is difficult to ascertain the motive which prompted this review of my preliminary work on the Polar Hares, the mature results of which I expressly stated in the *American Naturalist*,† would soon be published in the form of a compendious revision of the New World representatives of the *Lepus timidus* group. The importance which Dr. Merriam seems to attach to the paper in question, by devoting thereto three times the space taken by his succeeding review of Sclater and Thomas' new 'Book of Antelopes,' together with the suprising attitude taken on certain questions of nomenclature and diagnostic technique, demand a rejoinder.

Waiving the objections made to my reestablishment of the specific distinction of the American from the European Polar Hare, and my restriction of the type locality of the latter to southern Sweden, let us consider Dr. Merriam's position regarding my adoption of the name *arcticus* of Ross for the Baffin Land Hare instead of *glacialis* of Leach, which comes nineteen pages later in the same book. In the absence of any statement to the contrary, I proceed on the supposition that Dr. Merriam still agrees with me in taking the Code of Nomenclature of the American Ornithologists' Union for authority in a case of this kind.

His main objections to the use of the name *Lepus arcticus* 'Leach,' Ross, are:

(1) "Capt. Ross was not a naturalist and made no claim to technical knowledge of zoölogy."

(2) "All that he [Ross] knew of the animal came from Leach."

(3) "Ten persons have used the name *arcticus*, while thirty-six have used the name *glacialis*."

(4) "Irrespective of the merits of the two names, *glacialis* would have to be taken if we accept the rule that in cases of names of equal pertinency, the first reviser of the group has the privilege of fixing the name."

The first objection only begs the question. The rules of nomenclature no longer attempt to define what should constitute the standard of authorship, contenting themselves in such a

* Friday, April 10, 1896, pp. 564, 565.

† March, 1896, p. 256.