

sense physiology and behavior in birds. For this purpose young herring gulls were secured, kept in a suitable cage on the beach and fed on small dead fishes until during the third and fourth weeks, all of the gulls but one died as the result of heavy trematode infestation secured from the fish. The death of these gulls seriously interfered with the work for a large part of the season.

Professor Strong obtained a considerable amount of data concerning the location of many colonies of breeding herring gulls on the Great Lakes. He also studied the distribution and activities of the herring gull from the standpoint of one of the topics recommended by the committee on zoology of the National Research Council.

Miss Edith Priscilla Butler worked with Professor Strong on the reaction of gulls to sound stimuli. Some interesting data to be published later were obtained concerning the hearing of gulls. Observations were made on the docility of gulls and their capacity for learning.

Mr. E. L. Lambert and Miss Dorothy Cashen assisted Professor Strong in making records of the rate of growth of young birds. Mr. Roland Hussey worked with Professor Strong on the activities and distribution of birds in selected areas near the station. He visited these areas frequently and obtained important data correlated with weather and time conditions.

Mr. F. N. Blanchard, of the University of Michigan, collected data on the habitat and habits of the milk snake, and also did systematic work on this form. He made a determination of the *Cicindelid* fauna of the region, relative abundance of the species, the habitats of the adults and the habits of some of the more abundant species.

GEORGE R. LA RUE,
Director

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

THE PROPOSED TRANSFER OF THE UNITED STATES NAVAL OBSERVATORY TO THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

SECRETARY DANIELS has sent the following

letter to Chairman Padgett, of the House Committee on Naval Affairs:

My Dear Mr. Padgett: The Navy Department wishes to express most emphatically its disapproval of H. R. 10954 to change the name of the United States Naval Observatory and to transfer the same to the Smithsonian Institution.

The United States Naval Observatory has grown to its present proportions and position in the astronomical world through the efforts and under the control of the Navy and this department believes that its continued efficiency can best be maintained by retaining the present organization.

Any interference in the work of the observatory at this time when all are engaged in war work in addition to regular routine duties interrupts the supply of nautical instruments to the active fleet which may cause disaster.

The work done to keep up the supply of chronometers, sextants, compasses and other necessary instruments is more or less confidential and it is advisable not to put it in this communication, but it will be furnished in a verbal report if desired.

In addition to its work for the Navy, the observatory has the custody of sextants and chronometers purchased by the Shipping Board.

In March, 1909, the Secretary of the Navy issued an order establishing an astronomical council and stated, "The astronomical work of the Naval Observatory shall be so planned and executed as best to subserve the following purposes and no others, to wit:

"To furnish to the Nautical Almanac Office, as far as may be possible, such observations and such data as may be needed for carrying out the purpose of the law under which the appropriations for that office are made from year to year, which is as follows:

"'For . . . preparing for publication the American Ephemeris and Nautical Almanac and improving the tables of the planets, moon and stars . . .'

"The principal work of the observatory shall be in the field of the astronomy of position as distinguished from astrophysical work, and shall be the continued maintenance of observations for absolute positions of the fundamental stars and of stars which are to be made fundamental, and in addition the independent determination by observations of the sun, of the positions of the stars, moon and planets with reference to the equator and equinoxes.

"TRUMAN H. NEWBERRY,
"Secretary"

The duties of the institution have been so arranged that it is believed entirely satisfactory results have been attained, while the operations move with a common purpose known to the entire staff. The council has held its regular meetings and special meetings for the consideration of matters requiring prompt action.

The Naval Observatory consists of an astronomical department for securing the most accurate positions of the heavenly bodies possible; a nautical department in which are tested and repaired navigational instruments for the Navy; an office for the preparation of a nautical almanac by which the ships ascertain their positions at sea; a time service by which the operation of all railroads, ships and commercial bodies are furnished accurate time daily; a compass office in which the latest form of compasses are examined, as well as a means to show the younger naval officers the latest improvements in them; an inspection department, with inspectors at New York, Boston and San Francisco, under direct supervision of the observatory. These inspectors are on duty at the factories of manufacturers engaged in the production of navigational material for the Navy and United States Shipping Board. There is not another national observatory in any country that has all these departments combined under one head and carried on in one plant. Therefore, when this question of expense arises and comparisons are made, those separate departments should be combined to get the true cost.

A few of the complimentary notices from competent authorities are appended.

GIFT TO THE RED CROSS FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH IN FRANCE

THE Atlantic Division of the American Red Cross has announced that hereafter all expenditures for vivisection would come from a fund which had been contributed by an individual. The announcement, which came here from Harvey D. Gibson, general manager of the Red Cross in Washington, said that this fund also would be used to reimburse the treasury of the organization for money already spent in experiments on living animals. Mr. Gibson's statement in part was as follows:

Considerable public and private criticism has been made of an appropriation of the American Red Cross in August, 1917, for medical research work in France, because partly involved in this work was experimentation upon living animals

for the purpose of finding methods of prevention and remedies for new and strange diseases among soldiers. This appropriation was made at a time of emergency, upon the recommendation of army medical officers and of a number of eminent scientists in this country. Prompt action was necessary, and it seemed to officers of the Red Cross at the time that the use of money in this way was proper from the Red Cross point of view, for it would be difficult to imagine any more imperative duty upon the Red Cross than to seek for every means of prevention and remedy for sickness among soldiers.

The Red Cross did not, as has been stated, appropriate this money for abstract medical research and experimentation. It was to be used for the direct and immediate purpose of finding ways to prevent or cure wounds and sickness among American soldiers. It was strictly a war measure. It develops, however, that there are large numbers of earnest Red Cross members who have sincere convictions against the use of animals for discovery of remedies for sickness. We recognize that it should be an obligation of the Red Cross management to show deference to such honest conviction.

Realizing the situation, an individual has come forward and has offered to supply money necessary for this work so that none shall be taken from the general funds of the Red Cross. The fund provided will also be used to reimburse the Red Cross General Fund for any expenditures in connection therewith in the past. The War Council decided to accept this offer without in any way taking a position either for or against the question in controversy, but because they do not wish their acts to be considered to be in conflict with the sincere convictions of Red Cross members.

The New York *Times* says in an editorial article:

It will be with regret deeply tinged with indignation that all sane and reasonably enlightened people will hear of the decision by the heads of the Red Cross not to use for animal experimentation—often and almost always incorrectly called “vivisection”—the money hitherto appropriated by them for that purpose. The decision may mean avoiding the loss of a few contributions to the Red Cross funds, but it also means the triumph of vicious ignorance over common sense, and it will encourage to further efforts the members of the most detestable and not the least dangerous group of men and women to be found in the United States.