

TWO NEW MAMMALS FOR THE TORONTO REGION LIST

By CLIFFORD E. HOPE



WHILE spending the day in the woods near Forks of Credit, Peel County, Ontario, on June 12th, 1933, the writer captured a living specimen of the Woodland Jumping Mouse, *Napeozapus insignis*. This individual, the first to be taken in the Toronto region, was preserved and is now in the collection of the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology.

Subsequent efforts have resulted in the taking of twenty-three additional specimens. Of this number only four were secured by means of mouse traps. The remainder were taken in a pit device which consisted of a wooden box, approximately two feet in depth, sunk in the ground in a situation in which it became half filled with cold spring water. The series of specimens indicates that the Woodland Jumping Mouse of this region is referable to the form *N. i. insignis*. Although some of the specimens were secured from moist areas forested with mixed deciduous and coniferous

growth, by far the greater number came from low ground, rather thickly covered with poplars, bracken, etc.

Another notable addition to the list of mammals known to occur in the Toronto region was made in October, 1932. A line of one hundred and ten mouse traps was set in the poplar-bracken habitat mentioned above. On the following morning, October 10, one of the traps contained a Bog Lemming Mouse, *Synaptomys cooperi*. Geographically the form for this region is *S. c. cooperi*. The specimen proved to be a pregnant female, two large embryos having been found when the mouse was dissected.

Again, on September 4, 1933, a male specimen of this mouse was picked up dead from a path not fifty yards from where the first specimen was trapped. Two small abrasions were discovered on the side of the specimen which suggested that it may have died from mechanical injury.

REPORTING SUB-SPECIES IN THE CHRISTMAS CENSUS

By W. E. SAUNDERS



AN IMPORTANT point with regard to this discussion, and one which has not been sufficiently stressed, is the absolute inability of even the keenest observer to determine sub-species in life. Even with the specimen in hand, the difficulty facing any but the most experienced is all but insuperable, while in the case of birds in the field, it simply cannot be done.

Many sub-species mix during the migrations. Take a song sparrow for instance. Our authority, the A. O. U. Checklist, gives *melodia* for northern Ontario, *beata* for the Mississippi Valley, and no Song Sparrow whatever for the Great Lakes region which includes London, Toronto and Ottawa! Now, these places have plenty of birds which we call Song Sparrows, and which doubtless really belong to the species; but, to which variety? The latest census from London mentions the Eastern Song Sparrow, and the guess (for such it was) was probably wrong, because our fauna is almost transitional, and the A. O. U. Committee were evidently afraid to commit themselves; so puzzled were they, that they were unable to say what birds we have. That being the case, who are we, to rise above them and declare that our sparrow is the Eastern, when there is not a single person among us who

has the ability to name the sub-species of the local bird from a specimen in hand?

Why, then, should we carry on the farce of naming the sub-species of birds seen in the field? Why not follow the sage advice of the Ornithological Editor and, admitting that we can only guess at the sub-species (and it does not matter anyway) simply call it a Song Sparrow? Then, if the committee refuses to give us a name for the species as a whole, let us thus make one for ourselves, and when it is in general use, the Committee must come to it, whether they like it or not; and, when all is said, are not the vernacular names supposed to be set by usage, and not by any Committee?

The Robin might be taken as another example. It is quite likely that the Western bird may pass through here on occasion, and it is likely that we may be visited by the race proposed by Mr. Todd, from the Ungava Peninsula; yet, if a Robin is seen on our Christmas census, down it goes as an Eastern, when we are using the term merely as a supposition. The truth is that, unless we have the specimen in hand and submit it to an expert, we can seldom do more than guess at it. Granted that the guess will probably be correct, when we are really guessing we should in all candour state plainly

that "All of the sub-species mentioned in this report are merely guesses and nothing more", a statement which would be absolutely truthful. Experienced ornithologists understand perfectly well that such reports are guesses, but what sufficient reason is there for us to make such a guess, when we can follow the guidance of our Ornithological Editor and use the name of the species. As for those who desire to have the sub-species named, why, let them look it up for themselves and make their own guess. Then, if they are wrong, they will have no one but themselves to blame.

Sub-species are for the closest student, not for the field worker.

Editor, *Canadian Field-Naturalist*.

As the originator of the much discussed 1932 Comox Bird Census I claim the right to reply to the learned chairman of the Committee. I have no objection to an Editor correcting my list but do strongly object to his adding his imaginary identifications and to his attempt at hairsplitting over the exact sub-species of birds that he has not seen and, evidently, is not well acquainted with. This attempt at meticulous exactness in these lists is neither scientific or possible. How can an enumerator, with probably only a momentary glimpse, in a very poor light, say for sure that this particular bird is a particular sub-species when, possibly, it is one over which our cleverest ornithologists quarrel with a series of skins in front of them? When I read such lists I have hitherto marvelled that there were such clever field-naturalists, now I know where the sub-species has, probably, originated.

I will admit that my list did require correction to comply with the last Check-list, but, not having this, I took the order from a recently published (1927) work that professed to adopt this order, in this way three or four families did not come in the correct order.

To describe a bird by its vernacular name without adding any distinguishing geograph-

ical or other appellation, seems to me quite as correct as adding after this "(sub-species?)". Admittedly, it should be the particular sub-species ordinarily found there or the only member of the family occurring. Heron for instance here can only be Blue Heron but whether Greater or Lesser is another matter.

Does it add to the scientific value of these lists by jumping to conclusions that the bird belongs to the most probable sub-species such as to connect my Raven to the Northern, my Robin to Northwestern (we have both Eastern and Western forms here). Why add Northern Pine to my very obvious Siskin? Western to my Winter Wren?

Some of the so called corrections expressed Mr. Lewis' opinion of expressing the common name. American Wigeon is as good as (better than) his Baldpate. Longtailed Duck as Old Squaw. Then is it a mistake to enumerate "Scaup Greater and Lesser" against his "Greater and Lesser Scaup Ducks". What else could a B. C. Coot be but "American"? At least the additions should be reasonably correct, witness his mistaken identification of the Chickadee. Surely it was better to leave it at this than bring on to Vancouver Island a Chickadee that does not occur there; we have only the one.

My description of our Crow as a Fish Crow seems to have been a source of sad trouble but had Mr. Lewis been acquainted with the Vancouver Island Crow he would have known, whatever it may be called, it is a fish Crow. Moreover this is given as an alternative name in most works on the Pacific Coast Birds. Can one conceive of a more clumsy distinction than the Northern Crow and the North-Western Crow?

In conclusion, I think these list should be published as sent in. The Editor may add his opinion if he likes, but after all the list represents the opinion of the man who saw the birds.

Yours, etc.

THEED PEARSE

Courtenay, B. C.

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS—The Bird Census Committee wishes to remind any interested readers to take a Christmas Bird Census on some day between December 20 and 28, and send a report of it to the Editor as promptly as possible. For

the kind of report desired, please see published reports of previous years and discussion in *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* for September, 1933, pages 112-116.



Saunders, William Edwin. 1933. "Reporting Sub-Species in the Christmas Census." *The Canadian field-naturalist* 47(9), 176–177.

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