

FOUR PAPERS FROM THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY, TORONTO, ONTARIO.

It is gratifying to see that this, one of the youngest of museums is developing so rapidly and satisfactorily along both scientific and popular lines.

A New Genus and Species of Flightless Duck from Campbell Island by J. H. Fleming. *Occasional Papers of the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology*, No. 1, June 22, 1935.

In this a new series of scientific papers makes its initial bow. We gather that it is designed for shorter technical subjects, original descriptions, revisions, etc. It is in convenient size for the book case, on good paper, well printed, and of dignified and workmanlike appearance.

This first paper in the series proposes a new genus as well as a new species, *Xenonetta nesiotis*. Campbell Island is one of the subantarctic islands in the New Zealand region. The reviewer does not feel competent critically to evaluate the work in this widely extralimital group of aberrant ducks but the author presents a convincing case that has already aroused considerable interest in working specialists. We are glad to see a Canadian working in the broader field of world ornithology.

A Revision of the Sharp-tailed Grouse with a Description of a New Race by L. L. Snyder, *ibid*, No. 2, July 30, 1935.

Mr. Snyder is coming to the fore as a systematic worker. This revision is a result of the author's study of the remarkable Sharp-tail irruption in northern Ontario and Quebec during the winter of 1932-3. He postulates six recognizable races of the species, — *columbianus*, *kennicottii*, *campestris*, *campisylvicola* Subsp. nov., *phasianellus*, and *jamesi*. Of these, four are attributable to Canada; *phasianellus* about James Bay and Hudson Bay in Quebec, Ontario and adjoining Manitoba; *campisylvicola* the prairie and semi-prairies of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta; *columbianus* throughout British Columbia and southward; and *kennicottii* in central Alaska, Yukon and the Mackenzie Valley south to latitude 60°N. *Campestris* is restricted to the prairies south of the Canadian line. The reviewer has not the material at hand to judge the distinction between *campestris* and the new race but the other distinctions as they relate to Canada he is inclined to accept. The distributions of these races on the map accompanying looks convincing and logical and Mr. Snyder is to be congratulated on producing so promising a result in a difficult subject.

A Study of the Sharp-tailed Grouse by L. L.

Snyder, *Contributions of the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology*, No. 6, Reprinted from the *University of Toronto Studies*, Biological Series No. 40, 1935.

This is primarily a study of the remarkable increase in number and flight of the species into more southern parts of Ontario and Quebec in the fall and winter of 1932-3 but is far more than this. It includes discussion of the species as a whole, its history, habits and distinctions. The type form *P. p. phasianellus* inhabits the area about James Bay and southern Hudson Bay, usually in limited numbers, but is subject to the same cyclic increase as other grouse. In 1932 the swing of the cycle was phenomenal and the species spread in unprecedented numbers far south of its usual range to vanish again the succeeding season as mysteriously as it appeared. This case was quite parallel to the abnormal irruptions of Brunich's Murre, Snowy Owl and Goshawk that have been reported in this country, and the Sand-grouse in Europe and the classical ones of the Lemming in Scandinavia.

Royal Ontario Museum Bulletin of Zoology, Bulletin No. 5, February, 1935.

Containing popular unsigned accounts of the Museum's notable collection of Passenger Pigeons and the new habitat group of the species. The former is largely due to the energetic efforts of Mr. Paul Hahn who has been untiring in discovering and acquiring specimens of this species in old mounted collections and elsewhere on behalf of the museum, where they will be carefully protected and come to their full scientific use instead of wastefully wending their way to destruction, the usual progress of stuffed birds in private hands.

The Pigeon Group illustrated in the Bulletin is a most creditable piece of work by the museum staff. It depicts a pioneer scene in a beech-maple forest clearing in the spring, with old wooden sap buckets and handmade spiles collecting sugar sap. Snow still lingers on the flats, the cabin of the early settler peeps over the rise and the hills bound the horizon. Pigeons are feeding in the foreground, others are just arriving. Overhead are dense flocks passing. The background is admirably painted with good atmosphere and blends well into the foreground. The accessories are well made and used effectively. Viewing it at ease and blotting out the modern surroundings one can well imagine that they have been transported backward many decades in time and are viewing a scene that must have been common in the early days of settlement but is now no more.—P. A. T.



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