

CORRESPONDENCE**Popular Bird Names.**

EDITOR OF 'THE AUK':

The central idea of such of your remarks on pages 503-505 of the current volume of your journal as are in opposition to the propositions submitted in my letter of May 21 appears to be contained in your statement that "We cannot enforce upon the public what the public will not have," for you admit that the said propositions are "all very well in theory." May I say that in your very opposition you are in agreement with me, for the intent of my letter, as carefully explained in the third and the last paragraphs thereof, was to suggest a way of finding out definitely what, in matters of popular bird nomenclature, the public will have, so that it might be given them in the next edition of the A. O. U. 'Check-List.' I did not propose that the A. O. U. Committee on Nomenclature adopt forthwith the propositions presented, but merely that they submit them to the bird-studying, bird-loving public for their verdict. Have you not, in your remarks, given the reasons why you personally would express approval or disapproval of the various propositions in such a referendum, instead of speaking of the question of the referendum itself?

Again I respectfully suggest that the A. O. U. Committee on Nomenclature obtain an expression of popular will concerning the points embodied in the propositions in my former letter, rather than proceed to arrange the popular nomenclature of the 'Check-List' in accordance with any assumption, no matter how well-founded they may consider it.

HARRISON F. LEWIS.

P. O. Box No. 6, Quebec, P. Q.,
August 6, 1920.

[We regret if we misunderstood or misrepresented Mr. Lewis's suggestion. It is quite in order and proper that any suggestions should be made to the Committee and they will, we are sure, receive careful consideration. It would seem more desirable, however, that they be sent direct to the Committee rather than be published in 'The Auk,' as the journal is already overcrowded.—EDITOR.]

Baker on the Birds of the Pleistocene.

EDITOR OF 'THE AUK':

The University of Illinois has very recently published a sumptuous monograph entitled 'The Life of the Pleistocene or Glacial Period' by Mr. Frank Collins Baker, Curator of the Museum of Natural History of the University of Illinois. It is a beautifully gotten-up volume of nearly 500 pages, and illustrated by no fewer than 57 plates.

In the absence of a subtitle, the reader would naturally be led to believe that the study covered all plants and animals that formed the flora and fauna of the Pleistocene or Glacial period throughout the world, in so far as it has come to be known, including such other knowledge as may have been contributed to the subject in this work. This, however, is by no means the case; for, as its author explains (p. iv), "the area selected for study includes only that part of the United States and Canada (east of the Rocky Mountains) that was covered by the great continental ice sheets. Deposits outside of this area, therefore, cannot be included, except for purposes of comparison, as there is no way of deciding just which interval they may represent. In fact, many of the records beyond the glaciated territory represent deposits which were forming continuously throughout the entire time of the Pleistocene, they not being greatly influenced by the great ice sheets. With this statement of the purpose of the work, it is easily seen that the title 'Life of the Pleistocene' is not inappropriate."

The present writer fails to catch the point of this explanation, inasmuch as were only the *title* of this work at hand, the person considering it would surely be led to think that the life of the entire Pleistocene period was to be taken into consideration.

An especially useful and extensive bibliography is found at the end of the work (pp. 404-448), and in the main this supports the author's argument with respect to his title, as, with but few exceptions, only such works are quoted as refer to the Pleistocene of eastern North America—that of the Pacific Coast being entirely ignored.

Now those who are at all familiar with the fossil birds of the Pleistocene are well aware of the fact, that quite a number of them have been discovered in that area of North America covered by the work under consideration. These have been chiefly figured and described by Cope, Marsh, Sellards, and the present writer, and are reported from New Jersey, North Carolina, Maryland, Nebraska, Texas, Florida, and perhaps other eastern States, or from localities east of the Rocky Mountains. Turning to the bibliography, we are surprised to find that none of Cope's are cited; only one paper of Marsh's is entered, and that refers to a Mastodon; while the list of Pleistocene birds described and figured by the present writer from Vero, Florida, are accredited to Doctor Sellards, or the birds are not referred to by name at all, although the mammals are so listed.

As a matter of fact, the present writer has described more Pleistocene birds, existing and extinct, from the eastern part of the United States, than all other palaeontologists combined up to date. This omission is to be greatly deplored, for in such a formal work as the one here considered, the ignoring of so important a group of vertebrates as Pleistocene birds—the rarest of all fossil vertebrata—casts not a little doubt upon the thoroughness of still other subjects treated in this volume.

R. W. SHUFELDT.

Washington, D. C., June 25, 1920.



Shufeldt, Robert Wilson. 1920. "Baker on the Birds of the Pleistocene." *The Auk* 37, 634–635. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4073206>.

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