

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NEBRASKA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION.

BY MYRON H. SWENK.

It is fitting at this time, when an affiliation between the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union and the Wilson Ornithological Club has just been consummated, that a brief historical summary of the former organization be presented to the readers of the Wilson Bulletin. The writer will, therefore, attempt to briefly sketch the circumstances which brought about the organization of the N. O. U., and some of the subsequent activities of that society.

Following the pioneer work with Nebraska birds, which began in 1804 and 1806 with the voyage of Lewis and Clarke up and down the Missouri River, followed by the observations of Thomas Say in 1819 and 1820, of Maximilian in 1833 and 1834, of Townsend and Nuttall in 1834 and ending with those of Audubon in 1843, there was a hiatus in ornithological activity in Nebraska until the work of Professor Samuel Aughey of the University of Nebraska, from 1864 to 1887, enabled the publication in 1878 of the first state list of Nebraska birds, in which 252 kinds were enumerated. During this same period of years Professor Lawrence Bruner, first as a boy at Omaha and later a young man at West Point, was also observing the birds in Nebraska, and when he later became associated with the University in 1888 he was in an even better position to gather information along this line. Consequently, in 1896 appeared his "Notes on Nebraska Birds," in which he listed some 400 kinds and summarized not only his information based on personal observation, but that generously furnished him by several other ornithological workers in Nebraska during the 80's and 90's, notably Messrs. I. S. Trostler, J. M. Bates, L. Skow, D. H. Talbot, and others. This work at once stimulated a great general interest in Nebraska birds, and the demand for it was so heavy that it was soon entirely out of print.

A year or two prior to the appearance of Prof. Bruner's



booklet, Dr. R. H. Wolcott came to the University of Nebraska, enthusiastic in his interest in ornithology and possessed of a comprehensive knowledge of bird life gained through years of field work in Michigan. Mostly through his influence an informal organization known as the "Lincoln Bird Club" came into existence. The writer remembers that the club had semi-monthly meetings at which matters of interest concerning birds were discussed and migration notes compared. At about the same time a similar club was organized in Omaha under the leadership of I. S. Trostler. In the spring of 1899 committees from these two bird clubs began negotiations for consolidation as a state organization, with the result that on December 26, 1899, the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union was formally organized and held its first meeting at Lincoln.

The progress of ornithology in Nebraska from this time forth has been almost wholly identified with this organization. The second meeting was held at Omaha, January 12, 1901, and the six subsequent meetings were held in December or January at either Lincoln or Omaha. Beginning in 1903, an annual field day was held in May in addition to the winter program meeting until the two sessions were combined on the May date in 1908, which has since been the regular time of meeting. Altogether, seventeen program meetings and fourteen field days have been held. The composite lists of the field parties on some of these excursions have been as follows: Lincoln, 104, 103, 94, 91, 85; Omaha, 79, 78, 76, 75; Peru, 75; Weeping Water, 93; and Dunbar, 69.

The publications of the N. O. U. have been in the form of "Proceedings," of which volume 1 (44 pp.) was issued in 1900, volume 2 (101 pp.) in 1901, and volume 3 (108 pp.) in 1902. The financial resources of the society not proving adequate to continue publication on this scale, in 1908 and 1909 the publication of volume 4 was accomplished in two parts (55 pp.), in 1910-1913 that of volume 5 in five parts (104 pp.), while volume 6 was completed in 1915 in three parts (68 pp.). These six volumes, with their indexes, in-



clude all of the publications of the society except a "Field Check-list of Nebraska Birds" issued in 1908 and a "Preliminary Review of the Birds of Nebraska" (116 pp.) prepared by a committee of the N. O. U., Messrs. L. Bruner, R. H. Wolcott and M. H. Swenk, and issued in 1904.

The men who have served as President of the N. O. U. since its organization are: L. Bruner (1899), I. S. Trostler (1900), E. H. Barbour (1901), J. M. Bates (1902), F. H. Shoemaker (1903), R. H. Wolcott (1904), Wilson Tout (1905), S. R. Towne (1906), M. H. Swenk (1907), August Eiche (1908), H. B. Duncanson (1909), L. Sessions (1910), H. B. Lowry (1911), D. C. Hilton (1912), L. Bruner (1913), T. C. Stephens (1914), and R. W. Dawson (1915).

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#### A RECENT INSTANCE OF THE NESTING OF BARN SWALLOWS ON CLIFFS.

NORMAN DE W. BETTS.

It is generally accepted that the breeding places of Barn Swallows before the white men built their hospitable barns were in caves and overhanging cliffs. Definite records of recent reversions to their old haunts are not very numerous and I have not run across photographs of nests so placed. A recent instance of nests built on cliffs near the city of Madison, Wisconsin, seems, therefore, worthy of record.

In the *Auk*, volume XIV, Dawson describes a visit to the headwaters of Lake Chelan in Washington, where he found several nests of the Barn Swallow in a cave hollowed out by the waves to a depth of some twenty feet. Two of the nests contained eggs (July 9, 1895). These birds, however, had probably never had any choice in the matter—no chance to take advantage of modern opportunities. In the report of the Geological Survey of Michigan, 1908, Peet describes the finding of a nest of this species at Menagerie Island, Isle Royale, in Lake Superior. It contained four young, nearly able to fly, on August 17, 1905, and was "built against the base of a cliff about twenty feet above the waves. A shelv-



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