

Rather, they should originate in islands off South America, and the discovery made by Mr. Reynolds in Tierra del Fuego doubtless supplies the clue."

Dr. Murphy's account is given rather fully because it does show that the hypothesis that the species nests in Tierra del Fuego cannot be discarded but remains to be proved by the identification of the species and subspecies which almost certainly breeds there. At the same time, the finding of the bird A.99 does conclusively prove that birds breeding on Campbell Island in the New Zealand region do reach the South American coast. It is generally thought that the subspecies *sanfordi* also makes the journey and the Corral specimen, the type of this subspecies taken off the South American coast, has been attributed to the Chatham Island breeding population by Dr. R. A. Falla. The finding of a ringed *sanfordi* on the South American coast would put the latter hypothesis beyond all doubt.

REFERENCES.

- Falla, R. A., 1938—*Rec. Cant. Mus.*, 4.
Murphy, R. C., 1936—"Oceanic Birds of South America," New York.
Sorensen, J. H., 1950—"The Royal Albatross," Cape Expedition Series, Bulletin No. 2.

CORRESPONDENCE.

(To the Editor.)

Sir,—So many requests for information as to the status of Peter's Check-List of Birds of the World have come to the Museum of Comparative Zoology that we think your readers would be interested in the matter. We have been appointed joint editors to see that the work is completed. Probably seven volumes will be required to contain the families not treated by Mr. Peters. A volume has almost been finished by Dr. Zimmer of the American Museum in New York. Sixteen collaborators have most kindly agreed to contribute the families that remain to be done and each one will be the responsible author of his contribution. We hope by this means to assure that the work will be completed in as short a time as possible.—We are, etc., ERNST MAYR, J. C. GREENWAY, Jr. Feb. 11, 1954.

REVIEWS.

Check List of the Birds of Great Britain and Ireland. Published by the British Ornithologists' Union. London.... 1952.

The British Ornithologists' Union issued its first list of British birds in 1883. Revised lists followed in 1915 and 1923. The compilation of a new list was begun in 1946 and the "Checklist of the Birds of Great Britain and Ireland" (1952) is the outcome of more than five years' work by a committee of distinguished ornithologists. Not unexpectedly, it is an important publication which will set the standard of national and regional checklists for many years to come. The general classification has been changed from the 1923 list to bring it into line with modern practice. The new list sets out to emphasise the importance of the species as a biological unit. Only species are numbered.

In the introduction there is a concise statement of the functions of a checklist and there are wise words on the difficulties—the acceptance of sight records, the recognition of obscure geographical races, correct orthography and vernacular names—which are likely to beset all authors of checklists. No checklist is ever likely to satisfy all critical readers, because in the words of the introduction, "the truth concerning natural phenomena cannot be arbitrarily decided."

Of especial interest to New Zealand ornithologists are the sections on petrels and arctic waders. The authors believe in big genera. It is good to see *puffinus* discarded and the shearwaters from the small *baroli* to the large *gravis* all grouped under *procellaria*. *Bulweria* as a generic name has displaced *Pterodroma*, a change which some in New Zealand may regret. The range of the black-browed mollymawk, of which there appear to be two

valid races, it not given correctly. This species has not been found breeding at the Auckland Islands, but the race *impavida* breeds further east at Campbell and Antipodes Islands.

As in the N.Z. Checklist, the grey and golden plovers are grouped under *charadrius*. The turnstone is put back in the *charadriidae*, whereas in the N.Z. List, which followed Witherby and Mayr, it is classed with the *scolopacidae*. The disappearance of the clumsy *heteroscelus* and the placing of the tattlers in the genus *Tringa* is a welcome innovation. But surely the specific name of the grey-rumped sandpiper is *incana*, and why is its alternative vernacular name given as Polynesian tattler? Melanesian, perhaps, but not Polynesian, for *brevipes* reaches only the fringes of Polynesia, and it is the typical Alaskan tattler which is entitled to the epithet Polynesian. It is perhaps surprising to see the monotypic genus *Xenus*, retained for the Terek sandpiper, when the bird has so many obviously tringine characteristics. Sooner or later the problem of the correct specific name of the little stint will have to be faced. There are sound reasons for believing that *C. minuta* and *C. ruficollis* are conspecific, and *ruficollis* (1776) has priority. Winter specimens of *ruficollis* were sent to England and identified as *minuta*. Although the pectoral sandpiper reaches N.Z. regularly and Australian records are accumulating, the S.-W. Pacific is not included in the given winter range.

Other points of local interest are:—The family Tytonidae (barn owls) is deemed superfluous. (Revisers of N.Z. List, please note.) Australia should be included in the range of *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*.

There is a distinct possibility that the day will come when a bird in the British List will be named after New Zealand. Malayan ornithologists now accept *novaezeelandiae* as the specific name of their pipit, formerly *Anthus richardi malayensis*. Revisers of the British list may have to carry the change further, so that the name of Richard's pipit becomes *A. novaezeelandiae richardi*.

Surprisingly enough, the name of the yellowhammer is food for speculation. The race *nebulosa* is now accepted as valid, and if the recent British and New Zealand checklists are correct, continental yellowhammers of the typical race are not known in Britain (but v. Ibis 95, 409) and the present stock of N.Z. yellowhammers is continental, not British. Has nearly a century of neozclanic climate turned the descendants of *E. citrinella nebulosa* into *E. c. citrinella*, or were the ancestors of our present yellowhammers brought from Europe?

All who have studied the history or systematics of New Zealand birds will find the new British checklist a valuable, stimulating and provocative document.—R.B.S.

A Species Index to the Emu.

The first number of the Emu appeared in 1901. On the completion of its fiftieth volume, A. R. McGill undertook the tedious and painstaking task of compiling an index. It is easily used and the arrangement is simple. Standing genera are given alphabetically and species with synonyms are listed under them. For some groups which especially concern New Zealand the list of references is formidably long. Thus *Diomedea* takes up nearly two columns, *puffinus* nearly three and *pterodroma* two and a half. By way of being still more helpful, the volume concludes with a list of contributors. It would be a major miracle if there were no misprints in a work of this kind. On p. 56 *maratima* should be spelt *maritima*. Future workers in Australasian ornithology will be very grateful to the author for the time he has saved them in hunting up references.—R.B.S.

Date of Publication—July 1st, 1954.

The Masterton Printing Co., Ltd., Lincoln Road, Masterton.