

the modern field worker if brought up to date by comparatively slight amendments. This the Committee is doing by issuing a series of supplements. For the serious worker in speciation and racial differentiation the acceptance of valid subspecies largely awaits the results of further revisionary work.

Among practising taxonomists there now remain no deep ideological differences, as Mathews' recent change in policy regarding generic and species limits has removed the last major bulwark against the final triumph of the Hartert school in Australian ornithology. Substantial progress in the modern treatment of genera, species and subspecies has been made by Dr. Ernst Mayr and his co-workers at the American Museum of Natural History, and the Smithsonian Institution has recently entered the field.

The magnitude of the work awaiting attention is great but there is one aspect of it, however, in which the taxonomic revisor has been cheated of some of his due. Mathews has so liberally applied his subspecific names all over the continent that he has provided a name for most contingencies, even after allowing for the certainty that many will fall into synonymy. After the exacting task of delimiting subspecies a worker now will not have the satisfaction of applying his own names—it will be mostly a matter of selecting one of the numerous Mathewsian labels. Unfortunately the International Rules do not permit an author to discard, as Mack attempted to do (*Mem. National Mus.*, no. 8, 1934, pp. 108, 114, 124) a Mathewsian name because of faulty description.

The associated biological problems in studying speciation phenomena in Australia, however, are of very great interest and will amply reward the taxonomic revisor. A very great fillip to this work is a fascinating new tool with which the taxonomist has been provided by Dr. J. Gentilli's studies on past climates and his demonstration that populations have become broken up and isolated in a number of 'humidity refuges' during sub-recent arid cycles enabling thereby new forms, subspecific and specific, to develop (*The Emu*, vol. 49, 1949, p. 114).

Marsh Terns Nesting.—Some years ago Marsh Terns nested in a lignum swamp near Point Cook, Victoria. Not being easy of access and only containing water occasionally, the swamp is not regularly visited by Melbourne bird observers. At the end of 1949, however, the Terns again nested there, though the young were on the wing before the discovery was made. The interesting point is that it was the observation, by Roy Wheeler, of adult birds, as far as three miles away, carrying food in the direction of the swamp, that aroused suspicion of the nesting.—C. E. BRYANT, Melbourne, Vic., 28/3/50.