News and Views

The British Trust for Ornithology

AN important step towards the better organisation of field studies of bird life has been taken by the recent initiation of a British Trust for Ornithology. There is probably no country that has so many competent field ornithologists as Great Britain, but so far there has been no centre to give scientific direction to their efforts, to co-ordinate their observations, and to arrange for participation in international investigations. There is, moreover, no permanent Government support for economic ornithology, despite the practical value of its study, and therefore nothing corresponding to the Biological Survey in the United States, or to the official Institute of Ornithology in Hungary: nor have we any *Vogelwarte*, such as those which the Germans maintain at Rossitten and on Heligoland. Notable success has indeed attended several co-operative schemes in Great Britain, both for the marking of migrant birds and for observational work over a wide area, recent census studies of the heron and of the great crested grebe being cases in point: but on each such occasion the machinery has to be created laboriously afresh. As the promoters of the new scheme justly say, "the demands of contemporary research have in this field outstripped the training and organisation available for meeting them".

THE intention is to establish an institute at or near Oxford to serve as "a clearing house for information and contacts", and as "a national field centre which can collaborate with other centres overseas". The institute is to be supervised by a salaried director, assisted by an advisory committee, and a chain of observers will be organised throughout the country. For these purposes an appeal has been issued for £8,000 to cover the cost during the first five years, and it is to be hoped that this will meet with a good response: the honorary treasurer is Mr. B. W. Tucker, University Museum, Oxford. The nucleus of a permanent endowment, also, has been provided by the very generous action of Mr. H. F. Witherby, editor of the magazine *British Birds*, in presenting the sum of £1,400, realised by the sale of his important collection of Palæarctic birds to the British Museum (Natural History). By the same act the national collection becomes enriched by the addition of valuable research material—some 9,000 skins representing about 1,300 forms—which has already been put to good use by Mr. Witherby in the study of plumages and moults and of geographical variation.

Natives of South Australia

THE seventh expedition, organised by the Board for Anthropological Research of the University of Adelaide, in conjunction with the South Australian Museum, has just returned from Ernabella, situated at the eastern end of the Musgrave Ranges and not far distant from the reserve for aborigines in the north-west of South Australia. Much of the expense incurred was defrayed from a fund received from the Rockefeller Foundation and administered by the Australian National Research Council. For two months previously, Dr. C. Hackett and Mr. N. B. Tindale had travelled on camels through the Musgrave Ranges and on to the Mann Ranges, studying the habits of the aborigines and following them in their daily pursuits. These two joined the main party in August, when an intensive survey of nearly a hundred natives, most of them as yet untouched by civilisation, was undertaken. Standard measurements, fifty-three in number, were made on each of 61 individuals by Drs. H. Gray and C. Hackett. Full-face and profile photographs of these same persons and a number of special photographs were secured, and about 2,000 feet of cinematograph films, portraying ceremonies and incidents in the daily life of the natives, were exposed.

THE Director of the South Australian Museum, Mr. H. M. Hale, had no difficulty in obtaining plaster face moulds of four men and two women, and full busts of four men—a remarkable fact when it is realised that this means that the subject must remain absolutely still for half an hour for the face and one and a half hours, or more, for the bust. Dr. K. Fry made observations on the reactions and behaviour of the natives. Mr. N. B. Tindale, ethnologist to the South Australian Museum, devoted his attention more particularly to social anthropology and language. Blood-grouping by Prof. J. B. Cleland and Dr. Hackett showed that out of 63 aborigines tested, 40 belonged to Group A and 23 to Group 0. Prof. C. S. Hicks and Mr. J. O'Connor carried out physiological observations, especially as to the reactions to temperature; the natives naturally wear no clothing of any description, keeping themselves warm at night, when the temperature in winter often falls below freezing point, by means of small fires. Profs. T. Harvey Johnston and Cleland made notes on the plants and animals used in various ways. Dermatographs, finger-prints and phonograph records were also taken. Since the Australian native is essentially a nomad and soon tires of being in one place, organised team-work on expeditions such as these enables much data of very varied nature to be obtained quickly before the novelty wears off.

World Wool Production

THE news that the price of wool is rising concerns more people than the primary producers. When one considers the extent to which the funds available for research institutes, especially those overseas, are liable to suffer in 'hard times', any sign that times are improving for those countries where wool is an important item in the national economy is welcome. The November issue of *Wool Intelligence*, for which the Imperial Economic Committee is now responsible, shows that smaller wool supplies are being accompanied by rising prices. West Riding quotations are 40 per cent higher than a year ago; indeed, there has been a rise in prices of about 15 per cent on the average between wool sales held in mid-October and mid-November. Wool production in the current

season is expected to show a reduction in South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, and although there may be slight increases in South America, the United States, and Great Britain, the aggregate production of these countries will probably be about 7 per cent less than last year. The increase in prices reflects not only this reduced production but also a real increase in consumption in all the world's textile centres. Along with this, unemployment in the woollen and worsted trades in Great Britain is down to 8 per cent, a half of what it was a year ago. The report gives details of wool trade and manufacture in many countries, mentioning some interesting developments. For example, "Active steps are being taken, with Japanese co-operation, to encourage sheep-raising and wool production in Manchuria with the object of securing for Japan an alternative source of supply" (most of her wool at present coming from Australia). Recovery in the mohair industry is also reported; the development of Empire trade may be seen in the imports into Great Britain, almost all of which now come from the Union of South Africa although in 1928 half came from Turkey. Turkey's best customer is now the Soviet Union.

Preservation of an Old English Village

WEST WYCOMBE is a seventeenth century English village which has recently come into the possession of the Royal Society of Arts and been reconditioned in such a way that its ancient beauty has been preserved and at the same time the amenities of present-day life have been introduced (Weir, W. and Hill, J. B. "Account of the Reconditioning of West Wycombe—Buckinghamshire." *J. Roy. Soc. Arts*, **81**, 893–910; 1933). In 1929, when the transfer was made, the local sanitary authority had already served notice of repair on some fifty cottages. The work of restoration has been carried out under the supervision of one of the authors, and the whole village is now let to tenants on agreement. Most of the property has been thoroughly reconditioned, inside and out, and the remaining twenty cottages have been partly reconditioned. Main water supply, main drainage, electric light in some cases, fenced gardens and wash-houses have been provided, and the interiors of many houses have been altered to give larger and better arranged rooms, with more conveniently placed doors and better lighting. The final result is a beautiful group of model cottages, showing what can be done for the preservation of old property as an alternative to its demolition. The series of photographs taken before and after reconditioning afford striking proof of the success of the experiment, and the brief accounts of the work carried out on different houses illustrate the diverse ways in which difficult problems were approached. The Royal Society of Arts is to be congratulated on the preservation of this old English village, together with the improvement in housing conditions that has been effected.

The Exceptional Summer of 1933

AT the meeting of the Royal Meteorological Society held on December 20, Dr. J. Glasspoole read a paper entitled "The Exceptional Summer of 1933". The sunshine recorded over the British Isles exceeded the average in each of the four months June–September, the mean excesses being 21, 17, 35 and 33 hours respectively. During this period many places in the south-east of England registered more than 1,000 hours of bright sunshine, nearly 200 hours more than usual. The total sunshine during these four months fell short, however, of that recorded during June–September, 1911. The mean temperature over the country generally exceeded the usual amount in each month February–October. July 1921 was as warm as July 1933 and these two Julys rank as the warmest on record. The mean temperature of August 1933 fell short of that of the Augusts of 1911 and 1899. The highest shade temperature recorded at Greenwich Observatory since 1841, namely, 100° F., occurred on August 9, 1911, while August 1899 is the warmest calendar month on record for the British Isles as a whole. The outstanding feature of the summer of 1933 was the warmth of June–September. The total rainfall over the British Isles during the six summer months April–September was 13·8 in., which is less than that of any summer since 1870, except 1870 with 12·4 in., 1921 with 13·1 in. and 1887 with 13·7 in. Rainfall was abundant in February and many reservoirs were overflowing at the beginning of April. Afterwards the slightly deficient rainfall of each month April–July, culminating in an unusually dry August, together with the loss by evaporation, resulted in a steady lowering of the level of the water in most reservoirs.

Statistics of Unemployment

AT the Royal Statistical Society's meeting on December 19, Mr. J. A. Dale read a paper on the "Interpretation of the Statistics of Unemployment". He suggested that there is a certain popular misunderstanding of the figures, in that it is generally supposed that 2¼ million unemployed are permanently out of work. The statistics which are most frequently quoted in public discussions do not, and from their nature cannot, disclose the way in which the actual personnel which they represent is constantly changing. It is a fact, however, that, although the total number of the unemployed may be about 2¼ million, the number of different persons unemployed in the course of a year is nearly six million, and a large part of the six million consists of persons whose unemployment is intermittent. Among those are to be included not only the 'temporarily stopped' workers and those whose employment is 'casual' but also many of the so-called 'wholly unemployed'. But there nevertheless remains a group whose unemployment is persistent and prolonged. Mr. Dale estimates that this 'hard core', represented by persons who have been unemployed for eight or nine months, number at most a million during the past year, the remaining five million being less unfortunate. There are many more in proportion suffering from prolonged unemployment in the depressed areas; about 100,000 of them were last employed in the coal mines, and the shipbuilding and iron and steel