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LOCAL NAMES OF BIRDS.

A study of the local names of American birds leads one to believe that our citizens delight to invent names for the species in which they take interest. In almost any region names for certain birds can be found that are not used elsewhere. Hence it is possible to collect rather long lists of names for birds that attract popular attention. For instance 92 local names are known for a single species of wild duck, the ruddy. In this case as in others some of the names have a touch of humor or local color that renders their study a constant pleasure. The ruddy duck for instance gets such appellations as booby, dumb-bird, and sleepy-head because it is slow to take alarm; and others like hard-head, leather-breeches, and shot-pouch because so often it safely emerges from a perfect rain of shot. It has various derogatory nicknames among the mildest of which are dinky, blatherskite, and fool duck.

The study of the local names of birds is not for interest and pleasure solely but has utility in that the proper local names of birds, must often be used in legal proceedings in order to secure convictions by juries or even by judges for violations of bird protective laws. Some of the State laws especially refer to various birds by local names, and it is evident at once that it would be useless to indict anyone for illegal shooting of the chewink when the local protective law lists the bird as the joeree.

For the use of Federal and State Wardens and for distribution to all interested in the general subject of bird names, the United States Department of Agriculture has published an illustrated and indexed catalog of more than 3,000 Local Names of Migratory Game Birds. This publication, Miscellaneous Circular No. 13 treating names of the ducks, geese, swans, cranes, rails, shorebirds, dives, and the bobolink may be obtained as long as the supply lasts upon request addressed to the Office of Publications, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

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