

CHICAGO NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

FORMERLY FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
ROOSEVELT ROAD AND LAKE SHORE DRIVE
CHICAGO 5, ILLINOIS

June 15, 1960

Dr. F. C. Lehmann V.
Universidad del Cauca
Museo de Historia Natural
Popayán, Colombia

Dear Dr. Lehmann:

Thank you very much for the second copy of Novedades, No. 4, replacing the one which failed to reach me. I find this number especially interesting and certainly your account of Oroaëtus adds a very great deal to our knowledge of this little known bird. Possibly I will have something to contribute a little later this year, I hope in time to appear in No. 6 of Novedades, but to some extent I am depending on von Sneider's latest collection for us which we hope to receive momentarily. If it comes up to expectations there should be new records for Colombia and perhaps taxonomic matters of interest.

I am very much interested in your proposed field guide for Colombian birds and certainly will do anything possible to assist you as to the selection of suitable English names. Perhaps the best procedure is for you to submit at the appropriate time a list of the questionable but alternative names so that those of us with an interest in these matters can express an opinion. Although it seems to many of us that standardization of vernacular names for tropical American birds is desirable, if perhaps not of very great importance, I confess that I see little hope of achieving unanimity in this matter. Eisenmann very consciously did an excellent job on Middle American birds and it would have seemed that we finally had a suitable standard to follow hereafter. But already most workers have differed with him here and there and each seems to be following his personal whim of the moment. The difficulty of reaching unanimity for South American birds will certainly be compounded so I am afraid your effort in this aspect of your field guide is unfortunately doomed to failure. Actually there are few, if any, bona fide English "vernacular names" for South American birds and I sometimes think it might be just as well to follow Hellmayr down the line, however ridiculous many of his English designations appear to be. At least he treated all American birds and thus established a base line that could have been followed. Since in the foreseeable future ornithologists will be working on this vast fauna piecemeal there is little chance that any of us will have much impact in standardizing the English names. But perhaps every little bit helps and I wish you all success in your effort. In any case let me know how I can best help you now.

Sincerely yours,

Emmet R. Blake
Emmet R. Blake
Curator of Birds