

26 June 1930.

Professor J.S. Huxley,
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Dear Huxley,

You asked me some time ago how I was getting on with Jourdain's egg measurements. I have heard from him again now and hope to be getting a few more species from time to time. At present I have only 29 and this is scarcely sufficient to determine how much allowance should be made for the size of the bird, still less to see if the different families and orders can be treated together as a homogeneous group.

However, as you are interested in how things are going I have made a rough allowance for size and got out figures which seem to be fairly comparable for the different sizes. I enclose a table in which my 29 are classified in five size-classes on a logarithmic scale such that two steps about doubles the linear dimensions. There are also five classes of variability A to E in egg-length which seem at least to be tolerably comparable. As you will see from the chart the larger birds do seem on my scale to be a trifle more variable though this may quite well be due to the inclusion among the larger birds of some common sea-birds. In any case I think that relative abundance can only be judged comparably among birds of about the same size so that the equalisation of the measure of variability between different size-classes may not be of great importance. My only bird book, Thorburn, gives practically no information about abundance, but perhaps you could see, even from what is now available, whether the commoner species are really turning out to be the more variable in egg length. The crow-like

(Notes on table)

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birds, as far as I can judge, are behaving pretty well, but the sea-birds so far not at all well.

I suppose ultimately it will be possible to obtain, perhaps from the Oxford ornithologists, a much better classification of abundance in birds than was possible for Ford's moths. I shall be very much interested to hear what you think of these results, especially on one point which will need to be considered, namely whether we shall not need some rough estimate of the world population of the different species.

Yours sincerely,

P.S. To certain Prof. Damberley, whom I do not know, is much aggrieved that my book does not give due prominence to the "growing opinion" that (apparently) adaptation itself is a myth. I do not really know what to do with this point of view, for which I fear Bateson must be held largely responsible, since to deny adaptation seems to be to ignore every bit of detailed knowledge we possess, either on physiology, structure, or ecology; still I believe this blind spot is pretty widespread especially on the continent