

### Marking Eggs.

Among the numerous offerings you will doubtless receive giving methods and means used in the preparation of specimens, I would like to submit one on kindred subjects.

One is the subject of marking specimens. I frequently receive sets with none of the eggs marked or at most but one. Specimens in this condition seem little better than nameless waifs. They are genuine as to species and are bona-fide sets but when once away from the hands of the man who collected them they assume a doubtful status. It seems to me each of the eggs in a set should have marks on it conveying three items of information, i. e., the species, a set mark peculiar to this one set, and the number of eggs in the set. The first should be shown by the A. O. U. check list number. The second may be selected at the discretion of the collector. My set mark system at present is a consecutive collection number beginning at 1. In this way similar sets of different seasons are never confused by the same set mark. Until the series number reaches five figures it is not at all cumbersome. When 9999 is reached I intend to begin at 1 again and prefix "a" as the index of the new series. This method fits in very nicely with a loose leaf field note book I use where in each page is numbered. This page has on it only the notes referring to one particular set and the number of the page is the one given to that set as a set mark.

The third mark is naturally the number above the hole toward the large end of the egg, and in the other two in the shape of a fraction at the opposite side of the hole, the numerator being the set index and the denominator the number of eggs in the clutch.

Some collectors use only a set index, which has one serious objection. When separated from the note book of the collector containing the numbers in regular order it is impossible to tell the species (in many instances) or the number of eggs in the set. We should remember that we are preparing eggs that will exist in collections after we are gone and they should be marked so as to leave no chance for confusion.

Other collectors begin each season with number 1 and use a different letter each year to designate the year. Probably this is as good a plan as mine but doesn't fit my notebook system. There are several other systems in use which entail more writing on the eggs and therefore do not seem as desirable, though in the event of lost data the more facts concerning the set that are written on the eggs the better.

There is one other point I would like space to mention. It is the almost universal habit of collectors sending nests by mail or express, to pack cotton either in the nests or around them or both, with nothing between the cotton and the nesting material. Many a wasted hour have I spent patiently picking the fuzz of cotton from a lichen-covered nest of one species or from the bark strips and straw of another. The wrapping from an orange or a bit of newspaper would make this unnecessary and the nests would arrive in as good if not in better shape.

F. C. Willard.

