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October 30, 1939

Dear Huxley,

Thanks for sending me Lack's paper. The material seems to be of considerable interest, and there is only one point in the general discussion which may be worth making, and that is that, whereas he seems on p.19 to accept a theory of random survival for small populations as accounting for the systematic differences between the populations of the same species found on different islands, and speaks of them confidently as 'non-adaptive', yet on pp 20 and 21 he adduces most interesting evidence that just these differences do influence the emotional reaction of the birds very considerably. I suppose he is using the word "non-adaptive" in the rather limited sense of not adapted to environmental conditions in which the islands may differ, rather than in the wider sense of devoid of selective value.

I think you might transmit to the author some comments on Tables 2 to 5, in which the measurements are summarised. I think these tables are really rather unsatisfactory in arrangement, and that the coefficients of variability given must, in some cases, be wrong. I should like to suggest that, instead of encumbering himself with the calculations of the coefficients of variability,

the author might set out the actual frequencies observed for the different measurements in some form, such as the enclosed sheet. The coefficients of variability do not really give the comparison he wants, for the lower coefficients from the small islands might be due merely to larger means: actually this is not so, for the means are smaller; but it would make a better comparison if he provided the actual variances found for the different samples.

Such an arrangement as I suggest would also bring out the fact that measurements in whole millimetres, or perhaps half millimetres, are rather heavily grouped, and that the apparent variability is at least partly ascribable to grouping.

Although I think some of the calculations must be wrong, I think the contrast in variability between small and large islands would certainly be verified, and, although the statement under Table 2 that the table shows that each island population has a significantly different mean is certainly an overstatement, yet between some of the islands the differences will, I think, be significant. However, no more elaborate calculations can be made until the original frequencies are set out.

Tell Lack that I shall be glad to look at these, if he would like to consult me about putting the material on record. I am returning the paper herewith.

Yours sincerely,

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