

and subfamilies of Grallatorial or Wading birds, in reference to their mutual relations and natural series. According to the theory of classification which I have on several occasions endeavoured to establish by various evidence, we expect to find first a family exhibiting the greatest power and the highest general development consistent with the Grallatorial type; secondly, one specially marked by active power, or, which in this case is the same thing, approaching most nearly the form and characters of Insessorial birds; thirdly, one imitating in its habits the Rasorial birds; fourthly, one preeminently Grallatorial, showing in its figure and mode of taking food a special tendency to the character of this order; and last, one making an approach to the Natatorial mode of life, and having relations of structure and habits with the last division of birds whose life is properly aquatic. Where the families admit of subdivision we expect also that the subfamilies shall conform to the same general law, but where any family or subfamily represents a structural tendency strikingly at variance with the common type, we usually observe it to be very limited in extent, often confined to a single genus or even to one or two species. Of this latter principle there is a good illustration in one of the families of the order now under our consideration, if, at least, I am right in a view which finds much favour with me though I am not supported in it by authority. Dr. G. Gray makes the Phalaropes a subfamily of the Scolopacidae (Snipe family), placing it last among his six subfamilies, under the name Phalaropodinae. Considering the adaptation of these creatures for swimming and their seeming to snatch at their food whilst moving in the water, so as to have eminently aquatic habits though manifestly within the Grallatorial order, I am disposed without at all changing their position immediately following Scolopacidae to elevate them to the rank of a family and regard them as the Natatorial representative in the order, a change which is indicated by calling them Phalaropidae. It is true that there are but three species in Gray's work, and they must be altogether very few, but this might serve as an objection to their being accounted a subfamily as much as a family. The number of forms found in a genus, subfamily, family, order or class is widely variable. We use those names to express our idea of the comparative importance of the characters or our perception of the relation of the particular form to others.

There will scarcely be a doubt that Ardeidae (Cranes, Herons, &c.)