My dear Mr. Olin.

Thanks for your letter and the sample of Goodis' [illegible] of covers. I would gladly wait for you two more days because I have just hired an assistant for the winters and the assistant to begin work at once. The task I have set for this winter is a thorough recataloging of my collection and some more note-copying. You see you have led me into habits of extraneous and busy work.

After hearing your and Neuhäuser's objections to the High-Cards system of...
cataloguing and weighing these carefully I am satisfied you are both wrong and that much of your objections as having real importance can be easily done away with. I think you will admit this when you hear my present plan for a card catalogue of birds. It is thus.

I shall have thirty thousand cards made similar to the enclosed sample. I shall have the calls numbered printed running from 1 to 30,000, and the cards bound in books containing one hundred cards each.

Now suppose I start for B. Umbagog and effect to collect five hundred birds there. I take five or six books of cards and use as many of them as I need. As each book is filled I write on the cover: "B. Umbagog, Maine, Coll. Wm. Brewster, 1885." That is sufficient to
fit the locality, year, and collector of every specimen
catalogued inside. As the latter numbers are all printed
I have only to write on each card the day and date
of capture (or the year) of the specimen to which it
pertains. Oh yes! there is the name of the bird besides.

But this I would rather write twice than a third number.

In my return I have rubber bands made
over. On my return I have rubber bands made
for the locality, year, and collector, and cutting
the tapes which bind my cards I can spread them
out on a table and stand five hundred in
an hour. Then I shall put a rubber which
five hundred in

around them all and keep them together until I
arouse them from there. After
which they will be distributed in the systematic
places in the drawers.

Surely no system of putting more than one
specimen on a card can have any advantage to
compensate for them. They have claimed for this
system the undeniable advantage of having his
data in vertical columns. But you will see that
my present blank accomplishes this by simply
taking all the cards pertaining to a species from
their file, and laying them out on a table overlapping
one another so as to conceal everything but the
upper line, you have all the essential data in
a vertical column. The name of the species I shall
write either at the bottom of each card so that it
can be thus concealed or on the back of the card
when it is entirely out of the way.

I claim for this method the following advantages:

1. The boundless flexibility of the cards catalogue system.
2. The entire freedom from the mental strain and chance
for errors insensible from any system which requires
writing numbers consecutively. From this necessity of hunting up a certain card or page when one has a specimen to enter, imagine cataloguing fifty specimens of fifty different species by Keuleman's system, and the trouble you would have in hunting up your fifty cards and keeping the numbers straight.) The ease with which you can separate and formulate the data relating to birds of very given species. (Example: some one says the adults of a certain migratory species arrive first in autumn. You wish to test this. Separate your cards marked "adult" into one pile, then marked "juv." into another, then compare dates.) The ease with which you can change the classification of your cards, etc. (Example: the genus Otus is a few years since included only three M.R. forms, alpinus, cristula, and luculenta. Keuleman [confounded him!] splits it up into nine, Now
I suppose you have one hundred
specimens representing all these
types, forms, but catalogued under
three names only. By my system
you have only to separate your
cards into nine sets, cross out
the erroneous or out-of-date
names, and write in the names,
and then the thing is done.
By Huxley's system, the cards
relating to Oiocoris must be
torn up and then data copied
on nine new cards.

There are other minor
advantages but I trust I
need not go further. Write me
what you think of this matter
now.

About the slips for systematic
notes, journal, general observations,
field lists of species observed, etc.
I have decided to adopt a
uniform box of paper for
all these but I have settled
on a size considerably larger
than that you send. What are the advantages of having the paper correspond in size with Goodes' covers? My plan is to keep my sheets (after they are filled) in indexed files. I shall not discard my library cards but shall keep them for short notes, extracts from letters, and various odds and ends; I shall file them with the larger sheets.

Then I have settled all three points I intend to publish an article on the subject in the back. I wish I could publish it at once and wait for criticisms before having my paper made but this is out of the question. Please show this letter to Henderson and Good and write me what they and you have to find fault with. I should also like to have it either kept or returned for I can use some of it, very likely, in the article about referred to.

I sent the Petersburg Carol last week by car to you, to Smithsonian. The Chimneyville entirely slipped my memory but they shall go to you this week. My girl at Highlands is only and obscure & does not collect, but C. L. Boynton, Highlands, Macon Co., N. C., may help you. Write to him, mentioning my name, but don't give his address to any one, as you love me. So far he has not done much for me but he promises great things for the future. Your William Brewster.