

## General Notes.

**BENDIRE'S THRASHER (*Harporhynchus bendirii*) IN COLORADO.**—On May 8, 1882, while collecting near Colorado Springs with Mr. J. A. Allen, I made a most unexpected capture. The morning was a stormy one and thousands of migrants, driven in from the plains, had sought refuge among the foot-hills. So great was the "rush" of birds that at times we were fairly bewildered, scarce knowing what to select from the swarms that filled every thicket and sheltered hollow. At the height of the excitement a shy, pale-colored bird, which Mr. Allen had been pursuing along a steep hillside, alighted near me, just showing the top of its head above a large boulder. Without having the faintest idea what it was, I fired, and going to the spot picked up a Bendire's Thrasher. My surprise and pleasure can be best understood by those who have had similar experiences.

The specimen, which is in perfect spring plumage, proved to be a female. It is, so far as I know, the only one that has ever been taken north of Arizona. From its limited distribution in that territory and the peculiar character of the country which it normally inhabits, there is every reason to assume that the present occurrence is a purely fortuitous one.—**WILLIAM BREWSTER, Cambridge, Mass.**

**THE WATER THRUSH IN CONFINEMENT.**—During the early part of the summer of 1881, one of my juvenile attendants stopped me on my official inspection around the Garden, remarking that he had captured a half-drowned Sparrow, and asked if it should be given to the rattlesnakes. On examination, to my surprise, it proved to be a Water Thrush (*Siurus naevius*), with its plumage so water-soaked that it was unable to fly. I had it placed in one of the aviaries in company with several specimens of *Turdus mustelinus*, *T. fuscescens*, *Mimus carolinensis*, *Harporhynchus rufus*, etc., where it soon recovered and could be seen daily, busily engaged in capturing the insects attracted by the prepared food placed in the aviary. As the cold weather approached and its insect food failed, it changed its diet to the prepared food, and is still alive, in fine plumage, having safely passed through two moults.—**FRANK J. THOMPSON, Zoölogical Garden, Cincinnati, Ohio.**

**AN INTERESTING FLIGHT OF PINE FINCHES.**—A recent letter from Jonathan Dwight, Jr., of New York, contains the following interesting note which I have his permission to publish.

"When at Monticello (New York), early in October, I saw several small flocks of Pine Finches (*Chrysomitris pinus*). At Fort Hamilton, on October 21, their numbers were phenomenal. There were hundreds, and perhaps thousands, in flocks of from a dozen to sixty or seventy. A curious fact is that when we first saw them—about nine o'clock A. M.—every flock

was flying in a north-westerly direction, at a short distance from the shore, and all kept on without stopping as far as we could watch them. Mr. De L. Berier, who was with me, had never met with the species before. By posting ourselves in their line of flight we secured as many as we wanted. One shot brought down four and a Goldfinch (*C. tristis*), there being a few of the latter occasionally mingled with them. Later in the day we found *C. pinus* everywhere, usually feeding in corn-fields. They were equally abundant on the 22nd, but their morning flight was not repeated. The weather on the 21st was fair; on the 22nd, threatening rain. I can think of no satisfactory explanation of this mysterious migration, unless it be that the birds were intending to cross the Narrows; but if so, why did they not stop?"—WILLIAM BREWSTER, *Cambridge, Mass.*

ON LECONTE'S BUNTING (*Coturniculus lecontei*) AND OTHER BIRDS OBSERVED IN SOUTH-EASTERN ILLINOIS. — While hunting Prairie Chickens on Sugar Creek Prairie, in the southern portion of Richland Co., Illinois, October 27 and 28, 1882, I was somewhat surprised to find Leconte's Bunting there in great abundance; also Henslow's, which, however, was less numerous. The locality where the Leconte's Buntings were first observed consisted of a patch of "open" prairie 160 acres in extent, entirely overgrown with iron-weeds (*Vernonia noveboracensis*) mixed with occasional patches of prairie grasses—the only part of the prairie not under cultivation. They were found, however, almost everywhere, grassy places being mostly affected. In flushing them it was almost necessary to kick them from the grass, and it was very rarely one would start up farther in front than a dozen feet. Their flight, like that of *C. henslowi*, was very irregular, making it difficult to shoot them, but they could be easily distinguished from individuals of that species by the conspicuously lighter, more yellowish coloration. A few individuals of *Peucaea illinoensis* were also noticed in weedy places, along fences, etc., but being provided only with heavy charges of coarse shot no specimens were secured. Near a farm house a pair of Mocking-birds was observed on the date mentioned, and I was informed they nested in the orchard every season, while the species was of regular if not common occurrence in the vicinity.—ROBERT RIDGWAY, *Washington, D. C.*

NOTE ON "PASSERCULUS CABOTI."—This name only occurs in Baird, Brewer, and Ridgway's *Hist. of N. A. Birds*, Vol. II, plate xlvi, fig. 9—there being no description or text accompanying the figure, which is taken for specimen No. 62,373, Mus. Smiths. Inst., from Nahant, Mass. The bird is in fact a young *Melospiza palustris*, in a plumage hitherto unrecognized, in which there is a decided yellow loreal spot, and a vague yellowish suffusion of the cheeks and throat. I lately received a Swamp Sparrow from S. W. Willard, of West DePere, Wisconsin, who was in doubt of the identification, as my "Key" says of the species, "no yellow anywhere." The yellow spot is quite strong—about as in *Ammodromus maritimus*, and nearly as bright as in *Zonotrichia albicollis*. On examining the type of "*Passerculus caboti*," through Mr. Ridgway's attentions, I find it to be the same thing.—ELLIOTT COUES, *Washington, D. C.*

THE CARDINAL GROSBKAK IN MASSACHUSETTS.—On November 14, 1880, Mr. J. E. Fowle took a Cardinal Grosbeak (*Cardinalis virginiana*) in this place. It was with Chickadees (*Parus atricapillus*) hopping around on low bushes. It did not have the appearance of an escaped cage bird, such as worn tail feathers, long claws, etc.—E. H. RICHARDS, *Woburn, Mass.*

CROWS FISHING.—*A propos* of some notes recently published by Mr. Chamberlain on the fish-eating propensities of the Crows of New Brunswick, Mr. Manly Hardy writes me that he has twice seen Crows fishing in the Penobscot River near Bangor. On one occasion several of them were flying about over the water occasionally dipping down like Swallows, and seizing some floating matter which he thought might be offal from vessels. At another time they were making frequent forays from a boom-pier, to which they returned after each flight. They often struck the water with sufficient force to violently agitate its surface but never actually dove.

Mr. Hardy also speaks of their eating sea-urchins and other shell-fish, a habit which, of course, has been already reported; and he has known them to devour a string of twenty good-sized trout which had been left in a spring under water, well concealed, as he supposed, by the overhanging alders.—WILLIAM BREWSTER, *Cambridge, Mass.*

THE SCISSOR-TAIL (*Milvulus forficatus*) AT NORFOLK, VIRGINIA.—In January, 1882, there was sent to the Smithsonian Institution, by Mr. R. B. Taylor, of Norfolk, Va., a fine specimen of this species which that gentleman had shot January 2 in his door-yard in that city. The specimen was sent in the flesh, and being too much decomposed to skin, is now preserved in alcohol in the U. S. National Museum (Catal. No. 85,934).—ROBERT RIDGWAY, *Washington, D. C.*

THE CALLIOPE HUMMINGBIRD AND PYGMY OWL IN MONTANA.—The past season I had the pleasure of capturing in the Belt Mountains, the two following western birds: *Stellula calliope* Gould, ♂ Gold Run, May 24, 1882; *Glaucidium gnoma* Wagl., ♂ Gold Run, April 14, 1882. They are the only individuals of the species I have ever seen, and are certainly rare in this part of the Territory.—R. S. WILLIAMS, *Gold Run, Mont.*

ON SOME REMARKABLE POINTS OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE AMERICAN KINGFISHERS.—In handling specimens of the American Kingfishers the writer has often been impressed with some very curious features of relationship which he does not remember to have seen noticed, and which, therefore, he takes this opportunity of bringing before the readers of the Bulletin.

The American Kingfishers, so far as known, comprise six species,\* all belonging to the genus *Ceryle*. These six species fall into three very

\* Two geographical races, which pass current for "species" are not included, these being *C. stellata*, Meyen, and *C. cabanisi*, Tschudi, the former belonging to *C. torquata*, Linn., and the latter to *C. americana*, Gm.

distinct groups, each distinguished by a particular style of coloration, and composed of two species, *one of which is an almost exact miniature of the other*. This curious, and so far as I know unparalleled, case may be illustrated by the following tabular statement:—

- GROUP I. Color above, bluish plumbeous; throat and collar round neck, white; a plumbeous pectoral band, behind which there is more or less of rufous, at least in the female.  
Larger species, *C. torquata* (Linn.).  
Smaller species, *C. alcyon* (Linn.).
- GROUP II. Color metallic bottle-green above, the throat and nuchal collar, white; a bottle-green pectoral band, behind which there is more or less of rufous in the female.  
Larger species, *C. amazona* (Lath.).  
Smaller species, *C. americana* (Gm.).
- GROUP III. Color above, metallic bottle-green, the throat and nuchal collar, orange-ochraceous; lower parts rich orange-rufous, the male with a pectoral band of white and dark-green bars.  
Larger species, *C. inda* (Linn.).  
Smaller species, *C. superciliosa* (Linn.).

The curious nature of the case involves several other facts which may furnish rich material for investigation to those engaged specially in the study of the origin of species and the various problems connected therewith.

In the first place, the difference between the "homochromatic" species (if such a term may be used for those resembling one another in color), decreases in regular ratio from Group I to Group III; in other words, while the difference in coloration between *C. torquata* and *C. alcyon* is very marked (so far as the lower parts are concerned), the differences of coloration between *C. inda* and *C. superciliosa* are confined to the merest details; while *C. amazona* and *C. americana* differ from one another less than do the species of Group I, but more than those of Group III.

Scarcely less curious is the circumstance that between the largest species of Group I (*C. torquata*), which for size may be compared with an Ivory-billed Woodpecker, and the smallest of Group III, which is scarcely larger than a White-bellied Nuthatch, there is a regular gradation in size, the species standing thus, in the order of their relative dimensions.

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| 1. | <i>C. torquata</i> ,     | } GROUP I.   |
| 2. | <i>C. alcyon</i> ,       |              |
| 3. | <i>C. amazona</i> ,      | } GROUP II.  |
| 4. | <i>C. americana</i> ,    |              |
| 5. | <i>C. inda</i> ,         | } GROUP III. |
| 6. | <i>C. superciliosa</i> , |              |

As another noteworthy fact, it may be stated, however, that 2 and 3 on the one hand, and 4 and 5 on the other, are more nearly equal in size than are 1 and 2, 3 and 4, or 5 and 6. — ROBERT RIDGWAY, *Washington, D. C.*

RICHARDSON'S OWL IN SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE.—On December 15, 1879, I took a female *Nyctala tengmalmi richardsoni* at Hollis, New Hampshire. It was in a small grove of white pines, and was sitting bolt upright by the side of a trunk about ten feet from the ground. It was wide awake, for it watched me closely as I stepped back in order not to mutilate it. The weather was mild at the time with about three inches of snow on the ground.—WILLIAM H. FOX, *Washington, D. C.*

THE BURROWING OWL IN FLORIDA.—Mr. Chas. W. Gunn, of Grand Rapids, Mich., writes of the abundance of this bird in certain localities in Florida. "Hearing of a small Owl living in burrows in the ground, dug by itself, in the prairies east of the Kissimmee River, I ascertained beyond doubt that it is the *Speotyto*. Mr. Parker, state representative, who lives at Fort Bassenger, tells me they are very common on the prairies north and east of the Fort, where a dozen can be shot in an hour."—ELLIOTT COUES, *Washington, D. C.*

NOTE ON THE MISSISSIPPI KITE.—Dr. J. H. Mellichamp, of Bluffton, South Carolina, sends us a specimen of *Ictinia mississippiensis*, with a letter containing interesting notes on the bird as observed in that locality. About the second week in August several of these birds were observed, usually in pairs, hovering and soaring at a considerable height over the village, from morning till night, occasionally swooping down upon their prey among the oak-trees. Their motions were very graceful as they poised and floated, with their heads bent down in eager watch for their prey, occasionally uttering their peculiar cry. A specimen having been brought down from a great height, about the first of September, the rest disappeared, and were not seen again. Upon examination the stomach was found to be crammed with "locusts" (cicadas), among which were a few "katydids." A countryman who had killed one of these Hawks at his place informed Dr. Mellichamp they were there much less shy than they were here over the village, and that his poultry did not show the fear of them which they manifested for Hawks of other species. The writer considers the birds strangers in his locality, which is on the mainland, along May River, midway between Beaufort, S. C., and Savannah, Ga.—ELLIOTT COUES, *Washington, D. C.*

OCCURRENCE OF THE SWALLOW-TAILED KITE IN MASSACHUSETTS.—Mr. Raymond L. Newcomb informs me that he has in his possession a stuffed specimen of *Elanoides forficatus*, shot near the town of West Newbury, Essex Co., Mass., on the last of September, 1882. This is believed to be the first authentic capture of the kind on record for New England.—ELLIOTT COUES, *Washington, D. C.*

THE BALDPATE IN RHODE ISLAND.—The American Widgeon or Baldpate (*Mareca americana*) has been unusually abundant in the waters of Southern Rhode Island during November, and the first week of December, 1882. About December 1 a gentleman brought in a bunch for identi-

fication, and at the same time informed me that he had just killed twenty-four.—F. T. JENCKS. *Providence, R. I.*

GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION IN SIZE AMONG CERTAIN ANATIDÆ AND GRUIDÆ. — While much has been written on the subject of geographical variation in size among birds, I do not remember having read anything bearing upon the following apparent exception to the rule of larger size to the northward. In *Birds of the Northwest* (p. 723) Dr. Coues has called attention to "something very curious in the relationships that many birds of the families *Colymbidæ* and *Podicipidæ* bear to each other," many of the species of these two families having a "*fraterculus*" or "little brother," that is to say, a representative species differing chiefly if not only in its smaller size. In the family *Anatidæ* there are several similar cases, with this difference: That, whereas in the case of the Loons and Grebes all the *fraterculi* are of more southern range than their larger representatives, just the reverse is the case among the Geese, and also, in one instance at least, among the Cranes. As examples the following couplets may be cited:—

SOUTHERN FORM.	NORTHERN (SMALLER) REPRESENTATIVE.
<i>Olor buccinator.</i>	<i>O. columbianus.</i>
<i>Bernicla canadensis.</i>	<i>B. hutchinsi.</i>
<i>Bernicla occidentalis.</i>	<i>B. leucoparia.</i>
<i>Fulix marila.</i>	<i>F. affinis.</i>
<i>Grus pratensis.</i>	<i>G. canadensis.</i>
And among European species —	
<i>Anser albifrons.</i>	<i>A. erythropus.</i>
<i>Olor cygnus.</i>	<i>O. bewicki.</i>

Some of the above-named representative forms are specifically distinct, while others are allowed only the rank of geographical races; but in either case, the interesting question arises: Why do these particular examples offer so marked an exception to the acknowledged law of increased size to the northward?

The larger average size of North American specimens of certain *Anatidæ* compared with European examples of the same, or representative, species, is another "law" of geographical variation which I do not remember to have seen noticed; yet it is a fact which has frequently come under my observation when making comparison of material from the two continents. In several instances it forms almost the only character upon which subspecific separation is based, as in the case of the White-fronted Geese (*Anser albifrons* and *A. gambeli*) and the Golden-eyes (*Clangula glauciun* and *C. americana*). The difference seems to hold good in other species also, as the Mallard (*Anas boscas*) and Pintail (*Dafila acuta*), in both of which, so far as my observation goes, American specimens are constantly larger than European.—ROBERT RIDGWAY. *Washington, D. C.*

CASPIAN TERN IN OHIO. — Mr. Frank J. Thompson, of the Zoological Garden of Cincinnati, informs me of the capture of three specimens of *Sterna caspia* in that vicinity, about Oct. 9, 1882. In company with as

many others of the same species they were found on an "ice-pond" a few miles north of the Garden. The three secured were all killed at one shot. Mr. Thompson also writes that Mr. Dury has a fourth example which was taken on the Little Miami River about Oct. 15, 1882. Such dates and locality would both appear to be exceptional. — ELLIOTT COUES, *Washington, D. C.*

POLYGAMY AMONG OSCINES. — A letter received from Prof. F. E. L. Beal, of the Iowa Agricultural College, gives some interesting data upon this subject, in the cases of *Agelæus phænicus* and *Sialia sialis*. Having often been struck with the numerical preponderance of female Marsh Blackbirds, Professor Beal made in the spring of 1881 special examination of a small piece of swamp in which he always found one male and three to seven females. For two weeks, during which the place was carefully watched, only one other male made his appearance upon the scene, and he was at once attacked and routed by the one in charge of the premises. This past spring Professor Beal found one male and two females domiciled on a small prairie slough. Both nests were discovered, each containing four eggs, and the course of events was watched until the young were fledged — the arrangement remaining always the same.

The case of the Bluebird is given on hearsay, but seems perfectly authentic. A trio of these birds occupied two niches in the chimneys of the gas works at the college there, and raised two broods. The male paid equal attention to both females, often passing directly from one nest to the other, and was seen in congress with each of the females in the course of a few minutes. — ELLIOTT COUES, *Washington, D. C.*

THE PRESCIENT POWER IN BIRDS. — I wish to take friendly issue with Mr. Henshaw over one of the statements made in his recent article "On the Decrease of Birds." Alluding to the extermination of Purple Martins one season at Cambridge, soon after their arrival, Mr. Henshaw says \* in substance that facts of this sort sufficiently refute the superstition that birds are able to foretell the weather. I do not believe that a majority of observers are with him in that opinion. Because the Martins apparently missed it on the occasion cited, does it follow that they are wholly without that "mysterious faculty" which enables them to avoid tempestuous weather, *if they wish to?* And granting that this occurrence does prove the Martins incapable of taking an anticipative view of the weather, I refuse to admit that all migratory species, or even a majority of them, are similarly lacking. My own field of experience has gradually confirmed me in the belief † that at least many of our birds are able, by a faculty which most emphatically is "mysterious," to foresee a coming storm hours before any signs of such a storm are visible to human eyes.

Let me instance a circumstance bearing upon this matter: Oct. 26,

\* Bull., Vol. VI, No. 4, p. 193, foot-note.

† So eminent an authority as Mr. J. A. Allen has reached the same conclusion. See "Century Magazine," Oct., 1881, p. 938.

1873, was one of those beautiful days with which New Englanders are often blessed in autumn. The air was like crystal and scarcely a cloud appeared in the sky from dawn to dark. At my first glance out of doors, I saw that there was a great flight of Hermit Thrushes. They were in the woodbine about my window, in the roof gutter beneath it, and upon the ground, everywhere, in great numbers. Upon going out I found them actually swarming about the neighborhood. Business called me down town during the day, and in the latter part of the afternoon I found but few Thrushes in the outlying country. Next morning I awoke to find a violent rain-storm prevailing, which continued unabated until night.

Now I believe in a liberal deduction from such facts as the above and, per contra, such as Mr. Henshaw relates about the Martins. Is it not fair to accept such occurrences as indicating: (1) That many birds are forewarned of severe storms. (2) That they sometimes improve their opportunity to get out of the way. (3) That they sometimes, especially in the spring, prefer to run the risk of exposure.—NATHAN CLIFFORD BROWN, *Portland, Maine.*

MIGRATION OF BIRDS IN THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY.—[The following circular, which has been sent us for publication, is self-explanatory, but it may be well to add that several of Mr. Cook's reports for 1882 have already appeared in recent numbers of "Forest and Stream." His undertaking deserves the cordial support of all who are in a position to render him aid.—Eds.]

Last year a number of ornithologists were induced to unite with me in conducting a series of observations on the migration of birds in the Mississippi Valley. The results were so gratifying that the intention is to undertake the same again this winter and next year. As the value of the observations is greatly increased by making the stations more numerous, it is hoped that as many as possible may join in the work. The general plan will be during the winter to note carefully the habits and food of each species, and with the first approach of spring to note the date when each of the winter visitors begins to leave for the north; when the bulk of each species passes, and when the last one is seen. Of those species that pass through to nest further north, note the arrival of the first one and of the bulk; the departure of the bulk and of the last one. Of those that remain to breed, note first arrivals; arrival of bulk; breaking up of flocks into pairs; nesting; eggs; young; and any and all other interesting items concerning habits, actions, food, etc., which may come within notice.

Any one in the Mississippi Valley who is willing to aid in the work will confer a favor by dropping me a postal card. It is not necessary that one be an expert ornithologist; all can record the movements of our common and well-known birds, a full knowledge of whose movements will serve as the best foundation for the study of the rarer species. To such as wish to help, a full statement of methods and aims will be sent.—W. W. COOKE, *Jefferson, Wisconsin.*