

ing out on the latter from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ their length. (I cannot give the exact distances, as the quills are in moult and not full grown.) Shafts of both white to near tips. The two central tail-feathers are not longer than the other tail-feathers.—N. S. Goss, *Topeka, Kan.*

Brachyrhamphus hypoleucus off the Coast of Southern California.—On a return trip from the Coronados Isles to San Diego, California, May 20, 1884, when about five miles out to sea, and a little north of the Mexican boundary line, I shot a pair of Zantus's Guillemots. I have the birds in my collection. Notes from 'Catalogue and Register,' entered from memoranda taken at the time of killing:—

| Sex. | Length. | Alar extent. | Wing. | Tail. | Tarsus. | Bill. |
|------|---------|--------------|-------|-------|---------|-------|
| ♂ | 9.60 | 16.00 | 4.65 | | 0.95 | 0.75 |
| ♀ | 10.10 | 16.35 | 4.75 | | 0.95 | 0.80 |

Depth of bill at base, .23; width, .20; gape, ♂, 1.30, ♀, 1.40. Iris dark brown; bill black with sides of under mandible at base pale bluish; inside of legs, tops of feet and webs light blue; outside of legs, bottoms of feet and webs dusky; claws black; the testicles a little larger than swollen kernels of barley; no signs of the enlargement of any of the eggs in the ovary. On the way up I saw three others but was unable to approach near enough for a shot.

The birds closely resemble *B. marmoratus* in winter dress, and, like them, prefer to escape by diving and *flying* under the water, but when hard pressed more readily take wing. This I account for by their legs being longer, which enables them to spring at a bound clear of the water.—N. S. Goss, *Topeka, Kan.*

'Avifauna Columbiana'—a Protest.—Coues and Prentiss's late 'Avifauna Columbiana,'* while bearing the seal and token of its authorship in the clear and woodsy style of the notes, that so often give us bright glimpses of the life history of our birds, as well as in the arrangement of the scientific and technical matter, is yet disappointing in some regards, owing to the fact that the authors did not take pains enough to bring their work up to date, or to revise by recent observation the work of twenty-one years ago.

As it stands, the list is misleading in some of its statements, and does not thoroughly represent the recent progress of ornithology in the District of Columbia. In their preface the authors refer with justifiable pride to the first edition, prepared by them while yet in college, as standing "the test of time better than boys' work generally does." In their present edition "there has been found little to correct," "and not much to add. of the authors' own knowledge, because they have paid little attention to the subject during the intervening years. They have, however, *entirely recast*

* Avifauna Columbiana, by Drs. E. Coues and D. W. Prentiss, a revised edition of their 'List of the Birds of the District of Columbia,' published in the 'Smithsonian Report' for 1861.

the article," and "embodied the additions to the list made meanwhile, by others." It would seem, though, that but two or three of the numerous working ornithologists of the District have been consulted, and these rather for notes on a few specified species than for general information.

As a result, while they add eight species to Jouy's list (Catalogue of the Birds of the District of Columbia, by P. L. Jouy, 1877, which added 16 to Coues and Prentiss's list of 1862), they omit five more, viz.: Sanderling, *Calidris arenaria* (L.) Ill.; Yellow Rail, *Porzana noveboracensis* (Gmel.) Bd.; Sawwhet Owl, *Nyctale acadica* (Gmel.) Bp.; Turnstone, *Streptilas interpres* (L.) Ill.; and American Pelican, *Pelecanus erythrorhynchus* Gmel.* This does not include two, *Melospiza lincolni* (Aud.) Bd. and *Aegialites melodus circumcinctus* Ridg., which have been obtained since 'Avifauna Columbiana' went to press. Three birds mentioned as seen but not taken, but which should have been entered as taken, are *Archibuteo lagopus sancti-johannis* (Gm.) Ridg., *Porzana jamaicensis* (Gmel.), and *Falco peregrinus* (Tunst.) Cass. Many changes should be made in the remarks on the habits, arrival, and departure of birds; at least eight or ten of the birds noted as 'casual' or 'migrants' should be made winter or summer residents. Some of these inaccuracies may be owing to the changes which have occurred in the topography of the District. For instance, the formation of the great marshes in the Potomac, which is noted in the preface, may have induced the Great White Egret, Night Heron, and others to stay longer with us than they did twenty years ago. But one of the expressed objects of the present edition was to note and record these changes. In one or two instances the neglect to record notes of younger collectors almost lays their work open to more serious charges: in one case information that had been volunteered in regard to a nest and set of eggs of the Blue-winged Yellow Warbler (*Helminthophila pinus*), taken almost within the city limits, identified by Mr. R. Ridgway, and still accessible in Mr. H. Birney's collection, was entirely ignored.

Again, rather than admit a very pardonable error in their first edition, they try, by *ex post facto* evidence, to prove that Mr. P. L. Jouy and Mr. R. Ridgway were wrong in correcting said error. In their original edition they entered two species of Titmice, one *Parus carolinensis*, as 'summer resident,' and the other, *Parus atricapillus*, as 'winter resident.' In 1877, when Mr. Jouy made his 'Catalogue of the Birds of the District of Columbia,' this was the only District record of *atricapillus*, and as specimens of *carolinensis* bearing Coues and Prentiss's label of *atricapillus* are still to be seen in the Smithsonian collection, Mr. Jouy evidently thought that they had been deceived in their identification of the bird, and struck it out. In this he was justified by the following facts: (1) While *P. carolinensis* is not a rare summer resident, it is very abundant in the winter; (2) there was not a specimen of *atricapillus* taken in the Dis-

* For full notes on these birds see 'The Pastime,' Washington, D. C. (Vol. 3, Nos. 1 and 2.)

tract extant, except those on which Coues and Prentiss had evidently entered the species, and which differed from *carolinensis* only on the label; (3) the improbability that, if such accurate observers as our authors had proved themselves to be, had ever seen an *atricapillus* they would allow a *carolinensis* afterwards to bear a wrong label.

In the severe winter of 1878-79, Mr. William Palmer obtained several specimens of *atricapillus* in the District, and now Coues and Prentiss replace the bird, remarking that "Mr. Jouy subtracted the species wrongly, as now appears" (p. 9); and again (p. 37), "in the original edition we gave this species as a winter resident, and correctly so, though the name has recently been expunged from the list by Mr. Jouy (Cat. B. of D. C., 1877.) . . . It seems that after all the two boys may have been right in stating, as they did with hesitation in 1862, that *P. carolinensis* is the ordinary summer Tit; and that specimens indistinguishable from ordinary *atricapillus* occur in winter." If any hesitation was felt by the authors in 1862, they fail to show it in their text, but entered both species on an equal footing as summer or winter resident. And they perpetuate the error in the present edition, instead of placing *atricapillus* among the rare winter stragglers, and *carolinensis* as a permanent resident.

Had the authors asked for general notes from even the few collectors they did consult, they could not have kept some of their species so rare as they did, their unique specimen of Cape May Warbler, for instance, being duplicated some years before the phenomenal season of 1882.

As purely local lists draw their chief scientific value from the record they afford of the geographical distribution of species, and their principal interest from the amount of progress in investigation they mark, it is to be hoped that the next list may be compiled by some one not interested in keeping work done nearly a quarter of a century ago from becoming antiquated, or willing to rest on ever so well earned laurels.—L. M. McCORMICK, *U. S. Nat. Museum, Washington, D. C.*

Notes on Certain Birds observed on a Voyage from Liverpool to Quebec in September, 1883.—About the middle of September, 1883, I left England for Canada, and when far out on the ocean, was agreeably surprised to notice several well-known species of birds flying around and alighting on the rigging of the vessel. It may interest the readers of 'The Auk' to hear something of these migrants; as although it probably often happens that birds are met with by vessels crossing the Atlantic at that period of the year, there may be no passengers on board who take sufficient interest to note the various species.

The first bird that joined company with our vessel was a common British Hawk, the Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*); this was on September 23, when we were about 500 miles from the Irish coast, in fine and comparatively calm weather. It did not stay with us long; but on the following day, Sept. 24, several other birds appeared, viz., three Hawks, a Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla yarrelli*), and two *Saxicolæ* (probably *Saxicola œnanthe*, the Wheatear). We were now nearly a thousand miles from