

THE AMERICAN CROSSBILL (*LOXIA CURVI-ROSTRA MINOR*) IN LARGE NUMBERS NEAR CHARLESTON, S. C.

BY ARTHUR T. WAYNE.

IT will doubtless be interesting to the readers of 'The Auk' to know that the Red Crossbill has been very abundant at McPhersonville, a beautiful little village four miles from Yemassee and about sixty miles from Charleston, during the months of November and December, 1886, and January and February, 1887.

The first intimation I had of the bird in question as having been captured near Charleston was from my friend Dr. G. E. Manigault, the well-known osteologist, who called to tell me of the good news on Sunday evening, in the early part of January, 1887. Dr. Manigault received a very fine adult male from a gentleman at McPhersonville, to whom is due the credit of adding the Red Crossbill to the birds of South Carolina.

This gentleman is W. D. Gregorie, Esq., who has observed the habits of birds around Yemassee and vicinity for years, and is a great enthusiast in matters pertaining to ornithology, and whose knowledge of the birds of that region is very great.

I wrote Mr. Gregorie, in the latter part of January, to secure specimens of the Crossbill for me, and after the lapse of a few days I received from him three fine specimens, a male and two females. I therefore resolved to explore the country around Yemassee for a day, with the hope of seeing the bird alive, and left Charleston on January 28. The result of this day's trip rewarded me by the capture of a female, which I shot out of a pine tree one hundred feet high; the bird was feeding on a burr. I also had the pleasure of seeing a large flock of about twenty individuals. I secured during my stay only a single example. Although I was somewhat discouraged, I did not give up hope, but determined to visit Yemassee again and explore the country thoroughly.

During my stay at Yemassee, from February 5 to 14, I was the guest of Mr. Gregorie, and he took me to the best localities where I would be sure to get the Crossbills. My stay was a very pleasant and satisfactory one and I will give the result in detail: On February 7, I shot thirteen examples, five

males, and eight females; on February 9, four males; on February 11, a male and a female; February 12, four males. The result of my collecting was twenty-three examples,—fourteen males, and nine females. I studied with much care the habits of the Crossbill.

They go in flocks of from six to forty individuals, and fly in the manner of the American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*), but their flight is generally very high and greatly protracted; their note while on wing is very similar to the cry of young chickens. They always alight in the tops of the pines, and each individual then gets a burr, to see if it contains 'mast.' I have seen as many as three birds on one burr. I shot several out of a tree, and the rest did not even take wing but kept on feeding. They frequent only the pine woods, and feed wholly on the seeds contained in the burrs of the long-leaved and short-leaved pines. I examined the crops of every bird I killed, and found them crammed with the seeds of the pine.

I have shot them from the tops of the dead pines, among the burrs; but they rarely resort to the dead pines unless they are frightened by Hawks.

The Crossbills were at Yemassee in large numbers—over a thousand—where they arrived about the last of November, and were still there as late as February 15.

The weather for a week in February was very hot and sultry, the thermometer registering 80° in the shade for several days, and in the sun would probably have reached 90°, but Crossbills were then as thick as Blackbirds. The only reason I can see for their remaining there for so long a time is that the 'mast' was to be found in abundance.

I cannot refer to a single record of the occurrence of this bird in South Carolina, much less on the sea-board, except that given by Audubon, who refers to one shot out of a flock near Charleston by his son. This, so far as I am aware, is the only record for South Carolina, save the one I give.

The credit of adding this bird to the fauna of South Carolina is due to Mr. Gregorie, for had he not shot and sent the specimen to Dr. Manigault, I would never have had the pleasure of making the present record.

Mr. Gregorie says that the Crossbills were abundant at Yemassee in the winter of 1872 or 1873, but were not in such num-

bers as they have been this year. He also adds that he has not seen them until this winter since they appeared in 1872 or 1873.

My series of specimens from Yemassee embraces twenty-nine examples, representing every stage of variation.

Since writing the foregoing I visited Yemassee again, and on April 1, 1887, one of my collectors shot thirteen specimens; on April 2 I shot a single specimen; again on April 4 my collector brought me ten specimens. The number of specimens killed in April was about thirty, as several were thrown away being in poor plumage.

I visited Yemassee again in May and found the Crossbills still there, but not in such numbers as in April. My collector brought me a female on May 6, and a male on May 19. These two specimens were the only ones taken in May. The Crossbills were seen for the last time on May 22, but I am under the impression that some of them remained until the first of June, when they all left for their breeding grounds in the mountains.

I am positive that none of the Crossbills bred at Yemassee, as the ovaries in the females were about the size of No. 10, shot in April and May and all the previous months.

The Crossbills were not confined to Yemassee and vicinity alone, for they were shot at Hampton C. H., and at Brunson, in Hampton County. My opinion is that they were scattered all over Hampton County.

The departure of the Crossbills late in May to their breeding grounds may prove that the Crossbills which breed in the mountains of North Carolina do not breed until the summer, and, curiously enough, in this respect are very different from the Crossbills of the North, which breed in the winter and early spring months.

BIRDS OF TOM GREEN AND CONCHO COUNTIES, TEXAS.

BY WILLIAM LLOYD.

(Concluded from p. 193.)

133. *Cyanocitta cristata*. BLUE JAY. — Abundant in Zavalla and Dimmit Counties, near Eagle Pass, on the Rio Grande. Its limit to the