

## RECENT LITERATURE.

Sharpe and Wyatt's *Monograph of the Swallows*.<sup>1</sup>—This excellent and most welcome monograph, begun in 1885, has recently been completed (the last parts bear date October, 1894), having been nine years in publication. It forms two quarto volumes, comprising 755 pages of text with 129 plates, of which 26 are maps showing the distribution of the various genera and species, the remaining 103 giving colored representations of the birds themselves.

The total number of species recognized is 109, distributed in 12 genera, and two subfamilies—Hirundininae, including 10 genera, and Psalidoprocinæ, consisting of the two genera *Psalidoprocne* and *Stelgidopteryx*. Why the last-named genus should be thus separated from the genera placed in the Hirundininae is certainly not obvious, and no satisfactory reasons are offered in the Monograph.

Respecting the affinities and status of Swallows as a group, and particularly in their relation to Swifts, we may quote the following (p. xi): "When the 'rostral' system became somewhat exploded, they [the Swallows] were ruthlessly separated from their former companions [the Fissirostres], until now, in due course of re-action, they seem to be recognized as Passerine Birds of a somewhat Cypseline tendency, or perhaps, one might more truly say, the Swifts are Cypseline Birds with a Hirundinine tendency. For the nine years in which this book has been in publication, we entertained the hope that some competent anatomist would enact such a comparison of the characters of the two Families that we should have been able to summarize the results, and tell our readers exactly how the Swallows may be differentiated from the Swifts in every point of structure. In default of this much-needed exhaustive essay from our expert brethren, we venture to define the characters of the Hirundinidæ as follows:—

"A. Passerine Birds with nine primary quills.

"B. Spinal feather-tract bifurcated.

"C. A single moult in the year, executed, so far as we know from the migratory species, during their residence in the winter home.

"No Passerine Birds, we believe, present this triple combination of characters, but further information is, of course, desirable."

The conclusion reached is that Swallows are "Passerine Birds *without any very close allies.*"

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<sup>1</sup> A Monograph | of the | Hirundinidæ | or | Family of Swallows. | By R. Bowdler Sharpe, LL.D., F. L. S., F. Z. S., Etc., | . . . [= 6 lines of additional titles] | and | Claude W. Wyatt, | Member of the British Ornithologists' Union. | — | Volume I [-II] | — | London: | Henry Sotheran & Co., | 37 Piccadilly, W. | 140 Strand, W. C. | 1885-1894. 2 Vols., 4to, Vol. I, pp. i-lxx + 1-356, pl. i-liv; | Vol. II, pp. i-viii + 357-673, pl. iv-cxxix.

The subject of 'Geographical Distribution' occupies fifteen pages of the 'Introduction,' from which it appears that 5 genera are peculiar to the Old World, while 4 are peculiar to the New World. The geographic areas recognized are essentially those of Dr. Sharpe's paper 'On the Zoo-Geographical Areas of the World, illustrating the Distribution of Birds,' published in 1893 (Nat. Sci., III, pp. 100-108, — *cf.* Auk, XI, 1894, pp. 63-65). A 'Note on the Supposed Hibernation of Swallows' occupies pp. lxxix, lxxx of the 'Introduction,' from which we quote: "We will add, however, that we shall require further evidence of the hibernation of Swallows on the next occasion that a torpid specimen is produced from the mud or such-like place in winter. We shall want to see the moulted feathers of the bird in its place of retreat; for this little fact seems to have been unknown to the believers in the phenomenon, *that Swallows moult during the winter months.* Very few birds, we fancy, could support immersion in water, torpidity, and a complete moult of body-feathers, quills, and tail-feathers at the same time; and, for our own part, we do not believe in the hibernation of Swallows (we say nothing about 'Swifts,' which are Swallows still to the uninstructed), but prefer to think of them as wintering in a warmer climate than England, where insect food is procurable, and where they have a chance of surviving the trying process of their moult."

It seems strange to find so little on record in regard to the moult of Swallows. Judging from museum specimens—unfortunately *not* generally taken at the season when birds in general are in moult—there are some exceptions to the above-given rule, as I find an unquestionably adult male *Stelgidopteryx serripennis* (Am. Mus. No. 53251), taken at Fort Verde, Arizona, Sept. 20, 1886, by Dr. Mearns, symmetrically moulting the quills in both wings, and also the clothing plumage. The authors of the Monograph also cite Mr. Brewster's remarks on the moult of the young of the White-bellied Swallow (p. 158) which imply that the adults also moult before going south. Indeed, the authors of the Monograph say in the same connection: "In the Henshaw collection, however, are specimens which are commencing to moult on the 14th and the 27th of August, and an old female killed in the same month and at the same place (Sing-Sing, N. Y.) has almost completely donned its winter plumage, including the white-tipped secondaries; the longest primaries have not yet been shed."

That the adults as well as the young of both *Tachycineta bicolor* and *T. thalassina* undergo a complete moult of both clothing and flight feathers in the latter part of August and early part of September is abundantly shown by specimens of the former taken in northern New Jersey, and of the latter taken in Arizona and California, all of the adults in the collection taken at this season being in the midst of a general moult. Unfortunately there are no adult specimens of other North American species, taken at this season of the year, at hand at this writing for examination; but we should be much surprised if it turned

out that our other North American species, particularly the Barn and Cliff Swallows, should not also undergo a general moult about the end of August.

The principal literature of the family of Swallows is passed in review (pp. xxi-lxvii), the early French and English authors justly coming in for detailed notice; hence it seems all the more incongruous to find no notice of Linnæus earlier than 1766 (12th ed. Syst. Nat.)!

The plates, drawn by Mr. Wyatt and printed by Minturn Brothers, are well done. The text is very full and satisfactory, the biographies and the geographic distribution of the species, when known, being treated at length, a special and unusual feature being the numerous colored maps showing the ranges of the species. The North American species, owing perhaps to the fact that their habits and distribution are, as a rule, better known than those of most other species, are treated at unusual length, 11 pages being devoted to the Rough-winged Swallow, 20 to the Sand Martin, 22 to the White-bellied Swallow, and 24 each to the Cliff Swallow and the Barn Swallow. Great pains has been taken to work out the distribution of some of the species, as for example the White-bellied Swallow, the colored map (Pl. 35) showing, as nearly as could be ascertained, both its breeding and migratory ranges.

In regard to points of nomenclature we should not always be willing to subscribe to the practice here followed, as where *Progne purpurea* (Linn., 1766) is preferred to *P. subis* (Linn., 1758), and where *Petrochelidon swainsoni* Sc. (1858) is adopted in preference to *P. melanogaster* (Swain., 1827), because the latter does not chance to be 'appropriate.' But where there is so much that is worthy of commendation, it becomes ungracious to criticise what is not wholly to our taste.—J. A. A.

**Ornithology in the Standard Dictionary.**<sup>1</sup>—The specialist determines the advance made in a knowledge of his chosen subject by reviewing the literature relating to it, but to learn what part of this has become

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<sup>1</sup> A | Standard Dictionary | of the | English Language | Upon Original Plans | Designed to Give, in Complete and Accurate Statement, in the Light of the Most | Recent Advances in Knowledge, and in the Readiest Form for Popular Use, | the Orthography, Pronunciation, Meaning, and Etymology of all the Words and the Meaning of Idiomatic Phrases in the Speech and Literature of the English- | Speaking Peoples | Prepared by | More than Two Hundred Specialists and Other Scholars | Under the Supervision of | Isaac K. Funk, D. D., Editor-in-Chief | Francis A. March, LL. D., L. H. D., Consulting Editor Daniel S. Gregory, D. D., Managing Editor | Associate Editors: | John Denison Champlin, M. A. Rossiter Johnson, Ph. D., LL. D. | Arthur E. Bostwick, Ph. D. | Complete in One Volume | New York | Funk & Wagnalls Company | London and Toronto | 1895 | Printed in the United States. Roy. 4to. pp. xx, 2318, numerous cuts in the text and both colored and uncolored full-page plates.