

The Western Martin and the California Cuckoo at Escondido, Calif.—On June 11, 1896, three or four pairs of black, swallow-like birds were seen flying swiftly about, and were seen to alight occasionally upon the eaves of the college building of that place. On June 12 I was fortunate enough to secure an adult female, which proved to be *Progne subis hesperia*. This bird had a soft-shelled egg in her oviduct.

August 20, while out hunting for a Road-runner, I saw a bird that was new to me. It seemed very tame and had a long tail, similar to a Dove, but the flight was quite slow and resembled that of a Sparrow Hawk. It proved to be a fine male *Coccyzus americanus occidentalis* and measured as follows: Length, about 12.50 inches; wing, 7.00; tail, 6.00; bill 1.00. Iris hazel. This specimen was taken among sumac bushes on a foothill. On Aug. 22 another bird of the same species was noted.—J. MAURICE HATCH, *Escondido, Calif.*

Bird Notes from Toronto, Canada.—Somateria spectabilis. KING EIDER.—Nov. 18, 1895, I took an adult male of this species in the most perfect mature plumage I have ever seen. The bird was alone and very wild. Immature birds of this species are not uncommon late in the autumn on Lake Ontario, but adult birds are extremely rare.

Porzana noveboracensis. YELLOW RAIL.—Sept. 12, 1894, I took a female in the marshes east of Toronto, and a male at the same place, Sept. 4, 1895; also a specimen on Oct. 3, and still another on Oct. 15, of the same year.

I have never succeeded in finding this species in the spring, nor in summer before the month of August.

Cistothorus stellaris. SHORT-BILLED MARSH WREN.—On August 29, 1891, I found and secured an adult female of this species in an old field north of Toronto, the bird was a long distance from any marsh or water. On June 7, 1895, I captured an adult male in a wet meadow east of Toronto. There were no rushes near this place but the grass was very rank.—C. W. NASH, *Toronto, Canada.*

Iridescence of Feathers, as explained by an Old Author.—The modern theory that the play of colors seen in some feathers is due to the action of minute irregularities on the surface of the barbs and barbules, composing the vane, which, like a multitude of small prisms, split up the light into differently colored rays, was proposed more than two hundred years ago.

In 1666, Robert Boyle, the chief instigator and one of the most active members of the Royal Society, published a book on 'The Causes of Colors'¹ in which he treats the subject chiefly from a chemical and

¹ Experiments | and | Considerations | Touching | Colours | (Three lines). The | Beginning | Of An | Experimental History | Of | Colours. || By the Honourable Robert Boyle, | Fellow of the Royal Society. | . . . (Motto). London, | Printed for Henry Herringman at the | Anchor in the Lower walk of the New | Exchange. MDCLXIV.

physical standpoint. After ascribing the play of colors in various objects to the physical action of structural differences on the light, not to the coloring matter of the part, he speaks of the prismatic colors seen in certain feathers when examined against a strong light (p. 244, 245); and also states that the wonderful revelations of the microscope, then in its infancy, would doubtless show in such feathers minute prism-like structures as the cause of the iridescence—an interesting prophecy in the light of our present knowledge.—ARTHUR P. CHADBOURNE, *Boston, Mass.*

Birds Killed by a Storm.—About 11 o'clock P.M., on August 3, a terrific electric storm, accompanied by hail and wind, struck this city. Next morning the streets around the public parks and residence portions were literally covered with dead English Sparrows and a few Robins and other small birds. On one block in the residence portion of the city there were, by actual count, six hundred and twenty-two dead Sparrows, and one Robin. The nests containing eggs and young were blown down, and birds not killed by the fall were killed by the hail. Most of the old birds escaped, but the young, from just hatched to a couple of months old, were mostly killed, and had to be raked off the lawns and gathered up by street sweepers. A few more such storms would rid us of the detestable Sparrow.—WALTER I. MITCHELL, *St. Paul, Minn.*

NOTES AND NEWS.

THOMAS LYTTLETON, LORD LILFORD, late President of the British Ornithologists' Union, and Corresponding Member of the American Ornithologists' Union, died at Lilford Hall, Oundle, Northamptonshire, England, June 17, 1896, at the age of 63 years. He was one of the founders of the British Ornithologists' Union, and a prominent contributor to the early volumes of 'The Ibis.' Among his larger works are his 'Birds of Northamptonshire,' and 'Illustrations of British Birds.' He was enthusiastically interested in Hawking and in the study of live birds, his extensive aviaries containing many different kinds of Birds of Prey, Storks, Ibises, Herons, and Water-fowl. "His loss," says 'The Zoologist,' "will be deplored, not only by the learned societies of which he was so distinguished a member, but by a very large circle of friends and acquaintances to whom he had endeared himself by an unflinching kindness of heart and constant readiness to help."