

Brown Creeper. True, it is itself antedated by *C. rufa*, Bartram, 1791; but the present temper of the A. O. U. Committee throws Bartram out of the case. — ELLIOTT COUES, *Washington, D. C.*

**The Roadrunner as a Destroyer of Caterpillars.** — In southern California the passion vine is everywhere infested by a red butterfly (*Agraulis vanilla*), the larva of which feeds extensively if not entirely upon this plant. So great is the damage that plants are often completely defoliated and become so unsightly that in some regions many have destroyed their vines and replaced them with other species, less desirable perhaps but less apt to breed a horde of pests.

Not long since I called on a friend living in the suburbs of San Diego who had a large number of unusually thrifty passion vines climbing over his fence. Upon inquiring the reason of their freedom from what I had considered an inevitable pest, he informed me that a pair of Roadrunners (*Geococcyx californicus*) had for several months paid daily visits to his vines, climbing through them in all directions until the last caterpillar had been captured.

He said that he was satisfied that several newly hatched chickens had gone to satisfy hungry Roadrunners on one or two occasions when the vines yielded less than usual, but they were welcome to a chick once in a while for their very valuable service in keeping in check a pest that none of our other native birds seem to feed upon. — A. W. ANTHONY, *San Diego, Cal.*

**How the Chimney Swift secures Twigs for its Nest.** — Among some of the beautiful drawings of birds done by Mr. L. A. Fuertes, and submitted to my approval by the Messrs. Macmillan of New York, with reference to their publication in a work for which I am partly responsible, there was one which I 'held up' for further consideration. This represented a Chimney Swift in the act of snapping off a bit of twig with its feet, like a hawk seizing its prey. We have always supposed the bird secured the object with its beak, as it dashed past on wing at full speed; or at any rate that has been my own belief for more years than I can remember. But Mr. Fuertes vouched for the correctness of his representation from actual observation. The question being thus raised, I set it forth recently in a query inserted in one of our popular periodicals,<sup>1</sup> asking for information. I have received a number of replies, mostly corroborating the traditional belief, on what purports to be sufficient observation of the bird in the act. But Mr. Fuertes is supported in his view by Mr. Frank J. Birtwell, of Dorchester, Mass., from whose letter I quote: "In 1894 I spent the summer at Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, where the Swift is common, nesting in unused chimneys of the village. The bird flies to a tree, usually a spruce, and

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<sup>1</sup> 'The Nidologist' for March, just to hand, contains (pp. 80, 81) several replies to my interrogation — and these leave the case still open!