

I have taken this opportunity of describing the unknown first plumage and I have exploited the birds themselves in a manner which I trust has been of interest to my readers. The Philadelphia Vireos themselves, however, may think I have trespassed too much on my acquaintance with them.

THE TURKEY QUESTION.

BY DR. ELLIOTT COUES.

I WOULD not bring up this vexatious matter if we could flatter ourselves that we had settled it acceptably in the A. O. U. Check-List. That we have not done so is evident; for the British Museum Catalogue of 1893 reverses our decision, in so far as nomenclature is concerned; and we are not likely to be supported in that position by any writers except those who copy us blindly. In my judgment, we are exactly wrong; and I hope to see the wrong righted in the next edition of the List.

My contention is, that the name *Meleagris gallopavo*, as now restricted, belongs to the Mexican Turkey, and that some other name must be found to distinguish the Wild Turkey of the United States. There is no material fact of ornithology in dispute; the issue is simply the proper application of our rules in this instance; it is independent of any question whether the two birds be regarded as full species, or as subspecies; it is independent also of any question of the availability of Bartram's name *americana*. The point is, to which form of *Meleagris* does the Linnæan term *gallopavo* properly attach?

On various former occasions when I was treating of these birds — as in all the editions of the 'Key,' in the 'Birds of the Northwest,' in the 'Century Dictionary,' and in other publications, I have taken the ground that *M. gallopavo* designated the form called *M. mexicana* in 1856 by Gould, on the theory that the Linnæan name was based primarily upon the domestic Turkey,

which is incontestibly descended from the Mexican bird, mainly if not entirely. This is the view taken by most writers, as by Baird in 1858, 1866, and 1874, and endorsed by such high authority as Newton in the following terms (Zool. Rec. V, 1868, p. 102): "It seems to us that the name *gallopavo* must be retained for the tame race, and consequently for the species whence it has sprung, having been applied by Linnæus to the form domesticated in Sweden."

This is quite true; but I am willing to recede from the extreme of my position to the length of conceding that there may have been and doubtless were European importations of the United States bird as well as of the Mexican, and that thus both forms may have been actually concerned in the production of the domestic races. This does not alter the nomenclatural aspects of the case one iota; it simply makes the Linnæan *M. gallopavo* a composite, to be dealt with by our ordinary rule for such cases; which is, that the original name of a composite shall be retained for what is left of the compound after a new available name has been bestowed upon any one of its components. I do not doubt that *M. gallopavo* of Linnæus 1758 or 1766, covered all the Turkeys that author ever saw or heard of; and in that case, what was the first tenable name given to distinguish two or more forms, and to which form was such name applied?

Clearly, the United States bird was distinguished *from* the Linnæan *gallopavo* by several names, of different authors, long before Gould named the Linnæan residuum *mexicana*.

1. The first of these is *Le Dindon sauvage, Gallo-pavo sylvestris*, BRISS., Orn. I, 1760, p. 162, based exclusively on the New England Wild Turkey, *Gallopavo sylvestris Novæ Angliæ* of RAY, Syn. 1713, p. 51, No. 3. But Brisson was not a binomialist, and his name is unavailable, though it had been already used by Catesby, and was afterward brought up by Le Conte.

2. Probably the next names for the United States bird are *M. americana* and *M. occidentalis* of BARTRAM, Trav. 1791, p. 290 and p. 83. But Bartram, they say, was no binomialist, and I pass him by in this connection; though my most ardent opponent in Bartram's case, my friend Dr. Allen, has used *occidentalis* for the New England bird (Bull. Nutt. Orn. Club, I, 1876, p. 55), not

withstanding the fact that, as based on the Florida bird, it probably indicates the form now known as *M. g. osceola*.

3. *M. palawa* BARTON, Med. and Phys. Journ. II, 1806, p. 163, is another name for the United States bird, which may be passed by as resting on no description.

4. We next come to *M. sylvestris* VIEILL., Nouv. Dict. d' Hist. Nat. IX, 1817, p. 447, and *M. pera*, VIEILL., Gal. Ois. II, 1825, p. 10, pl. 201, both belonging to the United States bird, and one of them being tenable for it, if none of the foregoing be available.

It is thus seen that all the distinctive names of Turkeys belong to the United States bird, down to the time when Gould distinguished the other one; and that his name is a pure synonym for the Linnæan *gallopavo* after elimination therefrom of our common Wild Turkey. How then can the latter be considered the true *gallopavo*, and *mexicana* be tenable?

Inspection of the Linnæan basis of *gallopavo* will show its thoroughly composite character. The diagnosis, habitat, etc., cover both forms. The first citation is of the Fn. Svec. 1746, p. 198, which is of course the domestic bird. The second is Ray, as above noted, which is the New England bird. The third is Albin, 1740, pl. 35, which is the domestic bird. Then under β comes the *gallopavo* of Gesner, Aldrovandus, Belon, Jonston, Willughby, Ray again, and Brisson's pl. 16 — such references to the fathers and patriarchs including of course all Turkeys, though mainly bearing upon the domestic race. Finally, the Linnæan γ is the "*gallopavo cristatus*," being the crested variety of the domestic bird, as figured by Albin, 1738, pl. 33.

If I be wrong in this contention, it should be easy to refute me, as I advance no new facts — there are probably none to be found, so well is the whole case already known; and unless I have forgotten or overlooked some material point which will reverse my decision, we must use *M. gallopavo* for the Mexican bird, and find some other — I care not whether *americana*, *palawa*, *sylvestris*, or *fera* — for the common wild Turkey of the United States.

The error in this case is probably traceable to Baird, 1858, when *mexicana* was adopted; whence it went into the 'Hist. N. A. Birds' in 1874, as a matter of course, and thence by an easy transition was imported into our 'Check-List'; though I had meanwhile set the matter right in the 'Key' and elsewhere.

There is probably another change required in our nomenclature of this genus; certainly so if, as some think, *M. g. ellioti* of SENNETT, 1892, is synonymous with his *M. g. intermedia* of 1879.

Agriocharis ocellata is a term which has been applied to the Honduras Turkey, which differs superspecifically from *M. gallopavo* in the lack of pectoral bristles, peculiar carunculation of the head, long sharp spurs of the male, and ocellation of some portions of the plumage, as set forth by CHAPMAN, Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist. viii, 1896, p. 288.

SOME ABNORMAL COLOR MARKINGS.

BY GERRIT S. MILLER, JR.

MANY instances of albinism, melanism, and other abnormal color conditions in birds have been recorded,¹ but these records are for the most part concerned with cases in which large, conspicuous, and indefinite areas of the plumage are affected. While such abnormalities are interesting they are greatly outweighed in importance by others, usually of a less noticeable character, in which the unusual markings are so arranged as to resemble normal color patterns. Suggestions of characters of related species are often to be found in these symmetrical markings, some of which might be regarded as the result of hybridism did not the well known hypothesis of atavism offer a more satisfactory explanation of their occurrence. I wish to call attention to a few of the more conspicuous among the many cases of this kind that have come to my notice.

Colaptes auratus (Linn.).

An adult Flicker (No. 5619, Miller collection, purchased many years ago in the New York markets by J. G. Bell), normal in

¹ See, for instance, Deane, Bull. Nutt. Orn. Club, I, pp. 20-24, IV, pp. 27-30; Brewster, Auk, XII, pp. 99-100; Toppan, Bull. Ridgway Orn. Club, No. 2, pp. 61-77.