

B. poliocephala (Reichenow), *B. xavieri* (Oust.), *B. notata* (Cass.), *B. eximia* (Hartl.), and *B. canicapilla* (Hartl.).—CHAS. W. RICHMOND, Washington, D. C.

Barn Swallows (*Hirundo erythrogastra*).—Within a few yards of the house occupied by Mr. John R. Sandsbury during the time he is caring for the Terns on Muskeget Island, and where I make my headquarters when visiting there, is an old shed or boathouse which has several apertures. This shed has been used as a nesting place for the past six years by apparently the same pair of Barn Swallows. At my request Mr. S. made a few notes on these birds, which arrived this year (1898) on May 29. It is their custom to repair the old nest, they never having built any since the first one. Four young birds were hatched this season. The old birds would occasionally fly into the sitting-room of the house, but were always frightened on getting inside. When I was visiting Muskeget this summer (July 2-5, 1898), I found, in addition to the old pair of birds, still another pair, apparently birds of last year, assisting in feeding the four young ones in the nest. This they continued to do up to July 10, the date on which the young left the nest. On this date they were all flying about together, the young going at intervals to the nest to rest. On July 11, there were only the two original old birds and the four young ones, and they remained around until July 19, the young returning to the nest every night. The young birds were so tame that they would alight on, and even run over Mr. Sandsbury's fingers while he rested his hand upon a beam which was near the nest. They returned occasionally up to August 1, but were not so tame, alighting on top of the shed and on the clothes line near the house. At this latter date the group consisted of the two old birds and the four young.—GEORGE H. MACKAY, Nantucket, Mass.

Another Example of Curious Nesting of the American Redstart.—Mr. Verdi Burtch, in the October Auk, 1898, recorded a curious example of the American Redstart's nesting, and having had a somewhat similar experience, it may be of interest to record it.

June 3, 1898, I had been collecting about a swamp in the vicinity of Dorchester, Mass., and at noon sought the shade of a wood lot near. A female Redstart (*Setophaga ruticilla*) at once attracted my attention by her queer ways. I retired for a short distance and the bird settled upon a Vireo's nest, which was situated four and a half feet above the ground in a sapling. It contained five Redstart eggs. One of these was entirely buried beneath the others, in a thick lining of horse hair. The yolk of this egg had settled and hardened. The other four were fresh.

As numbers of Redstarts' eggs are annually stolen by boys from this wood, it may be possible that the following theory accounts for this strange thing. An incomplete set of Redstart eggs was taken; the female laid in the Vireo nest during the absence of the owners rather than deposit

her egg upon the ground. The Vireos deserted, and the Redstarts liking the nest lined it up with the usual material chosen in this locality and retained the nest as their own. The nest, I think, was the property of a pair of Yellow-throated Vireos (*Vireo flavifrons*) which I had often observed about. The nest and eggs are now in the collection of Mr. Brewster. — FRANCIS J. BIRTWELL, *Dorchester, Mass.*

Certhia familiaris americana, not *Certhia f. fusca*! — Dr. Coues has recently sought (Auk, April, 1897, XIV, 216) to resurrect the name *Certhia fusca* Barton (Fragments Nat. Hist. Penn., 1799, 11) and to establish it as the proper designation for the common Brown Creeper of eastern North America. His proposition unfortunately found favor with the A.O.U. Committee, and in the Ninth Supplement to the Check-List (Auk, Jan., 1899, XVI, 126) Barton's name supersedes the long-current *americana*. But *Certhia fusca* Barton, 1799, is preoccupied by *Certhia fusca* Gmelin, 1788 (Syst. Nat. I, 472) and therefore untenable. The next available name is apparently *Certhia americana* Bonaparte (Geog. & Comp. List, 1838, 11), so that the American Brown Creeper must be called, as heretofore, *Certhia familiaris americana*. — HARRY C. OBERHOLSER, *Washington, D. C.*

The Second Reference for *Anorthura hiemalis pacifica*. — In the Ninth Supplement to the A. O. U. Check-List (Auk, Jan., 1899, XVI, 125) the authority for the combination *Anorthura hiemalis pacifica* is given as Oberholser, Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., Nov. 19, 1898, XXI, 421. This is not correct. The proper citation seems to be Ridgway, Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., June 30, 1883, VI, 94. — HARRY C. OBERHOLSER, *Washington, D. C.*

***Piranga rubra* and *Carpodacus mexicanus frontalis* Preoccupied?** — The change of *Dendroica cærulea* to *Dendroica rara* (Ridgway, Auk, Jan., 1897, XIV, 97), which was promptly accepted by the A. O. U. Committee, involves an interpretation of Canon XXXIII of the A. O. U. Code of Nomenclature to which little if any attention seems to have been called. It appears advisable at the present time to raise this question, inasmuch as it affects the validity of some other current names; and this the more as in regard to it there seems to be neither unanimity of opinion nor uniformity of practice. Briefly stated, it is this: in considering the tenability of specific names, so far as preoccupation is concerned, shall any account be taken of homonyms which are mere combinations, *i. e.*, not original descriptions? To illustrate: *Motacilla cærulea* of Linnæus, 1766, was called *Sylvia cærulea* by Latham in 1790, — evidently a simple transfer of Linnæus's species to another genus. Now, does this *Sylvia cærulea* of Latham, 1790, preclude the use of *Sylvia cærulea* Wilson, 1810, for another and widely different species, the former being now a *Poliophtila*, the latter a *Dendroica*? Canon XXXIII is apparently quite explicit