

THE AUK:

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF

ORNITHOLOGY.

VOL. XIX.

OCTOBER, 1902.

No. 4

THE BIRDS OF THE ISLAND OF CARRIACOU.

BY JOHN GRANT WELLS.

Part II. Land Birds.

(*Concluded from p. 247.*)

47. *Columba corensis* Gmel. RAMIER.—This beautiful pigeon is our finest game bird, and is much sought after by sportsmen. They are numerous, and breed in numbers on the small islets; a few nest at Chapeau Carré and that vicinity. They are capable of being tamed if taken from the nest when fledged and fed by the hand until they are able to pick up food for themselves, when they can be kept like ordinary pigeons. A remarkable feature is that in the wild state the Ramier is exclusively a frugivorous bird, but the tame ones, raised on Indian corn, will not take fruit, though freshly picked and given to them. In Grenada the Ramier is principally confined to the 'high woods,' but in Carriacou they are found all over the island, from the grape trees on the beach to High North. Several spots are favorite resorts of these birds where good shooting can be obtained, notably Dumfries Gully, Belair Ridge, and Quarry Road. I have shot many on an 'acoumar' tree in Belair village surrounded by dwelling houses, and at Hermitage they can be shot from the door step as they fly to and fro, at certain seasons, to their feeding grounds. The nest is generally placed on the outspreading branches of the seaside grape tree or on a mangrove tree. It is composed of a few dry sticks, hollowed in the middle by the weight of the bird; the eggs are two, pure white, and of the size of those of the domestic pigeon.

48. *Zenaida martinicana* Bonap. *Zenaida castanea* (Wagl.). TOURTERELLE; SEASIDE DOVE; WILD PIGEON.—This dove is quite numerous

all round the island though it is seldom seen on the highest hills; it is a ground pigeon, feeding on 'pigeon peas' and fallen berries and seeds, though it may also be found eating the gomier and acoumar fruit. They are excellent for the table, and consequently large numbers are shot; the peasants catch scores in traps and snares and they are taken to Grenada for sale. They nest on the cliffs near the sea and also on the small islands; the nest is only a few dry sticks, generally placed in a sea-side grape tree. I have found some of their eggs laid in a tuft of grass on the ground. The eggs are white, and two in number.

49. *Zenaida rubripes* *Lawr.* TRINIDAD GROUND DOVE; MOUNTAIN DOVE.—This beautiful little dove occurs in numbers. Unlike the other members of the dove family, it is found in flocks of 6 to 15. It feeds on the seeds of grasses and shrubs, and when flushed from its feeding grounds generally flies a short distance and alights in a tree. I have counted as many as thirty-three perched together on an accacia tree. Harvey Vale and Beausejour pastures are favorite resorts of these birds. They are very swift on the wing, and it needs a quick eye to shoot many of them, and owing to their close plumage they 'carry away' a deal of shot. I have known one of these birds to drop nearly half a mile off after being hit. The eggs are two, pure white; the nest is placed in the accacia bushes and on the islets.

50. *Columbigallina passerina* (*Linn.*). GROUND DOVE; 'ORTOLAN.'—This pretty little dove is very abundant all over the island, the pastures and seed bearing grasses and shrubs being conducive to its welfare. They are fond of newly cleared land, and may be found in pairs on the roads, especially after they have been repaired.

The nest is a rude structure of dried stalks and grass, generally found in a short stump or low shrub, in which are laid two pure white eggs, measuring .85 X .60.

51. *Falco columbarius* *Linn.* PIGEON HAWK.—This is a migrant, and arrives about the same time as the different species of Scolopacidæ, on which they prey.

52. *Pandion haliaëtus carolinensis* (*Gmel.*). OSPREY; FISH HAWK.—A migrant which visits the island regularly every year; it is generally seen in August and remains until February and March. It frequents the bays around the coast; seldom more than one is seen at a time.

53. *Coccyzus americanus* (*Linn.*). AMERICAN CUCKOO.—This bird is new to our avifauna; I never saw it or heard of its being seen until the year 1896, when I saw a pair in Grand Anse pasture, the male of which I shot. Since then I have seen them every year, about October and November; it is a migrant.

54. *Coccyzus minor* (*Gmel.*). CUCKOO MANIOC; RAIN-BIRD.—A lazy and foolish looking bird, it creeps along the branches of a tree, and will take a short flight if alarmed. It feeds on crickets and other insects. Its note is a harsh grating sound which the peasants say is its "calling for rain." The nest is difficult to find, being usually placed in a tree covered with liannes. The eggs are pale green.

55. *Crotophaga ani* Linn. CORBEAU; TICK BIRD.—Not numerous in Carriacou; small flocks may be met with in the pastures where cattle are feeding, and they are often seen in the grass by the roadside hunting for crickets, their keel-shaped bill being admirably adapted to separating the blades of grass and starting the crickets which are then pounced upon.

The nesting habits of this bird are peculiar. I have not been able to determine how many eggs are laid by each bird, as they use one large nest in common. A flat nest is first built and about 6 or 7 eggs laid in it; then these are covered over and more eggs laid, and so on until four or five layers of nests have been constructed one over the other. I have seen four of these birds sitting on the nest together. When the top layer of eggs is hatched, and the young fledged, it is scraped off and incubation goes on with each succeeding layer, until all the eggs are hatched. The eggs are of a light green when newly laid, but they soon become coated with a chalky substance, which gets stained and scratched, giving them a dirty appearance. They measure 1.28×1.04 .

56. *Ceryle alcyon* (Linn.). BELTED KINGFISHER.—This interesting migrant visits the island about August, and may be found in pairs frequenting the manchineel trees along the shore. They generally perch on a twig overhanging the sea, from which they plunge and take their finny prey. When flying from one tree to another, or when alarmed, they utter a prolonged *churr*.

57. *Eulampis holosericeus* (Linn.). GREEN HUMMINGBIRD.—Not numerous; generally seen in pairs. Its nest, usually 'saddled' on a large tree limb, is a beautiful and compact structure. The two eggs are pure white.

58. *Bellona cristata* (Linn.). CRESTED HUMMINGBIRD; COLIBRI.—This diminutive bird is one of the most pugnacious known here; it will attack any bird that approaches its nest. I have seen it drive off a hawk by perching on its head and pecking at its eyes. They have many battles with each other, especially when several of them congregate over a tree covered with blossoms. At such times their motions are so quick that the eye can hardly follow them, but the whirring of the wings and clashing of the beaks tell the fury of the combat. The nest is usually built on the drooping branches of the tamarind tree, or on roots under the banks of the road. In the Parish Church in Hillsborough a pair of these birds have built their nest on the rope suspending a chandelier and reared their young for several years. I have also seen a nest built on a long nail in the wall of a house in Hillsborough. The nests are beautiful little structures, sometimes constructed of fine mosses, but those built of cotton wool and covered outside with spiders' web and fine bark are exquisite. They lay two diminutive white eggs.

59. *Milvulus tyrannus* (Linn.). SCISSORTAIL; FORK-TAIL FLY-CATCHER.—This is a migrant, arriving in August in considerable numbers. It frequents the pastures near the seashore, and preys upon the

winged insects which swarm about the rain-pools and swamps. It inflicts punishment on the sandpipers and other small birds, attacking them with its strong bill and opening and shutting its tail feathers like a pair of shears. Like most of the family of Flycatchers, this bird has on its head a crest of bright crimson and yellow feathers which is concealed except when excited or in chase of its prey.

60. *Tyrannus rostratus* (Sci.). PIPPIREE. — This bold and dashing bird may often be seen perched at the top of some dry tree on the lookout for flying ants and other insects on which it feeds. It darts out on its prey in the air, turning and twisting about with ease, and the snapping of its strong bill can be heard as it closes over the capture. It also frequents the ponds and pools, where, skimming along the surface, it captures dragon-flies, etc. They show great courage in defending their nests and will peck at the eyes and hands of anyone climbing the tree on which the nest is situated; dogs passing near the tree are vigorously attacked, and pigs seem to be most obnoxious to them. In the early morning its shrill note is heard, *pip-pi-ree*, repeated often in quick succession.

It nests generally in the white cedar trees and also on the hog plum; the nest is loosely formed of dry tendrils and midribs of leaves; there is no soft lining for the eggs, though the shallow cup in the centre is usually of finer material. The eggs are three, reddish buff handsomely marked with spots and blotches of red-brown and dark gray; they measure $1.15 \times .75$.

61. *Myiarchus oberi* Lawr. PIPPIREE-GROS-TETE. — This bird is not abundant. It has a foolish appearance, and will remain perched on a twig for several minutes muttering its call note *pleet, pleet*. It nests in holes in trees, the nest being usually composed of horse hair, bits of rag, rotten wood, etc. The eggs are three and sometimes four in number, of a light buff color thickly scribbled over and blotched with brownish purple; they measure $.96 \times .70$.

62. *Elainea martinica* (Linn.). TOP-KNOT PIPPIREE. — This is an active and lively little bird; its note may be heard from five o'clock in the morning and seems to say *Ladies-Ladies-Ladies-your-lazy*. It is quick in its movements when darting after insects on the wing or flitting from branch to branch.

It builds a beautiful little nest, usually in the fork of a branch, and sometimes 'saddled' on a large limb, in shape like a shallow cup about 3 inches in diameter and 1 inch deep. It is composed outwardly of skeleton leaves interwoven with cobwebs and cotton wool; it is lined with fine tendrils and feathers. It lays two eggs, pale buff with a pink tinge and a circle of brown and purple spots round the blunt end; they measure $.80 \times .64$.

63. *Quiscalus luminosus* Lawr. BLACK BIRD; MERLE. — Numerous all over the island, this bird does good service among the sheep and oxen by picking off the ticks that infest them; but they are detested by the peasants for robbing the cornfield. They will dig up the grains of maize

when planted, eat the sprouts as they come up, and also feast upon the young ears, uttering all the while their cry of *green-corn-sweet*. They are gregarious, large numbers being often seen together. A tree with thick foliage is usually chosen for roosting, the mango tree being often selected. Hundreds of them may be seen flying to one of these trees at dusk, and the noise made by them before settling down is nearly deafening.

Everything eatable seems to be food for this bird, and it is certainly an impudent thief. I have seen it watching the vendors of cakes in the market place, and as one of them leaves the tray for a while, down swoops the blackbird and helps himself to a bun or other choice bit. He will hop about the counter of the butcher's stall and snatch up scraps of meat as they fly from the chopper. It eats grain, ground nuts, fruit, and also robs the nests of other birds of the newly hatched young which it devours. When the Indian corn is being planted little urchins are kept in the fields all day knocking two bits of iron together, pelting the blackbirds with stones, and roundly abusing them both in words and song.

In spite of his sins this is a showy bird. It is striking to see the male strutting about with the sun reflected on the beautiful purple-black of its neck and wings, cocking up its boat-shaped tail every now and then. The female is of a sober brown color. They nest in colonies, several nests being placed on the same tree. The nests are usually composed of dry roots and coarse straw well plastered with cow dung. The eggs are three and sometimes four, of a light blue, scribbled and blotched all over with purple and black; they measure $1.02 \times .76$ to $1.00 \times .72$.

64. *Molothrus atronitens*. COWBIRD.—This bird was not observed until June, 1899, when flocks of six to ten were to be seen about Hermitage and Harvey Vale pastures. I believe it to be a migrant, though a few stragglers are seen all the year round.

65. *Tiaris bicolor* (*Linn.*). SEE-SEE ZERBE; BLACK-FACED SEED-EATER.—Abundant all over the island is this sober colored little quit. It feeds on the seeds of grasses. It builds a domed nest when placed in a shrub or in the roots of trees on the roadsides, but when built inside of a house it takes the shape of the angle between two joists. Several of them nest inside the church in Hillsborough; one pair built in a hanging lamp there and reared its young. In the court house a pair of these birds have reared two broods for several seasons in a nest placed in a 'sea fan' which stands on a shelf. The eggs are three in number, dull white, with reddish brown spots, confluent at the blunt end; they measure $.59 \times .48$.

66. *Progne dominicensis* (*Gmel.*). PURPLE SWALLOW.—Flocks of these birds may be seen hovering about over the fields and pastures capturing winged insects, especially after a morning shower. About noon they roost in numbers on some dry tree, or in the upper branches of the silk cotton tree. They nest in holes in the cliffs and in the walls of abandoned sugar works.

67. *Hirundo erythrogaster* (*Bodd.*). RUFIOUS-BELLIED SWALLOW.—

This migrant appears in August when large flocks may be seen near the sea coast, darting about, and occasionally resting on a dry twig. They disappear in November and December.

68. *Vireo calidris* (Linn.). BASTARD GRIEVE.—In the early mornings, notably in the months of April and May, the note of this bird is heard repeated energetically every few seconds, *Sweet, too sweet, not-too-sweet*, as it creeps along the branches of the tamarind trees. It is a shy bird and yet inquisitive, as it will come quietly to the end of a branch to peep at anyone standing under the tree, and on the least motion being made by the person, it makes off quickly. Its food is principally insects, but it also eats a small red berry, the fruit of a wild shrub. It is pretty well distributed all over the island. It builds a pensive nest, usually in the fork of a small twig, and sometimes suspended between two twigs, very compactly formed of dried grasses and fine tendrils intermixed with cotton wool. In shape the nest is like a deep teacup. The three eggs are white, with a few scattered spots of dark brown, and measure .88 × .60.

69. *Cœreba saccharina* (Lawr.). SUCRIER; YELLOW SEE-SEE.—This pretty little bird is numerous in Carriacou, and may be seen wherever there are blossoms, it being fond of the insects found in the petals; it also is partial to the fruit of the prickly pear. It nests both in trees and in houses, the nests built outside are dome-shaped, those inside are generally built to suit a space between two beams or flat on the sill. The church in Hillsborough is a favorite nesting place of this bird. I have seen a pair busily engaged building a nest on a chandelier in the church whilst divine service was being held and over 500 persons were in the building. A pair built a nest and reared their young in a tethering chain hung up for sale in one of the shops in Hillsborough. I might cite many other queer nesting places.

On a window sill in my office, a goblet of water is placed every day to cool; a pair of these birds seem to consider it is put there for their sole use and benefit; they will perch on the rim, take a drink, and then proceed to have a bath, and sprinkle the water about.

The eggs are three in number, of a dull white thickly spotted with brown.

70. *Seiurus nævius* (Bodd.). WATER THRUSH.—On the outskirts of the mangrove swamps this lively little bird may be seen, hopping about and flicking its tail up, uttering at the same time its note *tseep, tseep*. It is a migrant, though I have observed one or two all the year round.

71. *Mimus gilvus* (Vieill.). MOCKINGBIRD; PIED CARREAU.—The conditions of this island seem particularly to suit this bird, as it is found in profusion; in fact, it is the commonest bird here. Everywhere its song may be heard, always varying and ever delightful. Its notes may be heard at intervals on moonlight nights, which has gained for it the name of the West Indian Nightingale. It feeds on both fruit and insects, and is very partial to the berry of the black sage. It has been accused of eating the eggs of other birds, but of this I have no personal knowledge. It nests

everywhere, the accacia trees being often selected. The nest is usually a rude platform of dried twigs, with a round depression in the middle lined with fine roots, etc.; in this are laid three eggs, which vary considerably in color and marking; clutches are rarely found to be alike. The general color is pale green, spotted and blotched with brown; they measure $1.06 \times .74$.

72. *Merula gymnophthalma* (Caban.). YELLOW-EYED GRIEVE; THRUSH.—Not numerous; frequents the mango and other thick-leaved trees. Its notes, heard in the mornings, are very musical and varied; one note in particular is a liquid metallic tinkle. The nest is usually composed of dry roots and mud with no soft lining; the eggs are three in number, pale green thickly spotted with brown, and measure $1.06 \times .80$.

73. *Margarops albiventris* (Lawr.). SPOTTED THRUSH.—This bird was not seen here until after the terrible hurricane which devastated the neighboring Island of St. Vincent on 11 September, 1898, when numbers of them arrived, and it may now be considered as resident.

A NEW LONG-BILLED MARSH WREN FROM EAST-ERN NORTH AMERICA.

BY OUTRAM BANGS.

AT PRESENT there are confused under the name *Cistothorus palustris* (Wilson) two quite distinct birds; one, true *C. palustris*, breeding in the salt and brackish marshes of the Atlantic coast from Connecticut southward; the other inhabiting the inland fresh-water marshes and extending north to Massachusetts, Ontario and southern Manitoba. The former, a small bird, has the chin, throat and belly pure white and the breast is usually white also, though sometimes faintly clouded with pale brownish, with the rump, upper tail-coverts and scapulars dusky brown. The latter is a decidedly larger form, in which the chin, throat and belly are buffy or brownish white, the breast much more distinctly clouded with brownish and the rump, upper tail-coverts and scapulars reddish brown.

My attention was first called to the differences between these two Marsh Wrens by a series of winter specimens sent me by Mr. Arthur T. Wayne of Mount Pleasant, S. C. Familiar with the