

THE WEST INDIAN BLACK FORMS OF THE GENUS
CÆREBA.

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AMONG the West Indian members of the genus *Cæreba* are two peculiar forms, one known as *Cæreba atrata* (Lawr.) from the island of St. Vincent, and the other, *C. wellsii* (Cory), from the island of Grenada, which are entirely black. Mr. Ridgway has suggested (Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., Vol. VIII, 1885, p. 28) that these may prove to be merely phases of plumage of the normally colored birds inhabiting the same islands, and I shall in the present paper advance reasons for this supposition.

In the genus *Cæreba*, all the species are (except in these two cases) dark above, with a light superciliary stripe, and yellow, or yellow and white, below. Most of them have a yellow or yellowish patch on the rump, and all have the bases of the primaries (forming a wing spot) and the tips of the outer rectrices white. It is evident then, that the genus has a definite and well marked color-pattern. In the black forms there is an olive tinge on the underparts (except the throat) and rump, corresponding to the yellow markings of the normally colored birds *inhabiting the same islands*. The black forms are of the same color from the first appearance of feathers, and not of more normal coloration in the younger stages as we might expect were these forms simply species widely divergent from the generic type.

The black birds are identical in size, coloration of naked parts, actions, notes, and nesting habits with the normal birds of the same islands. In the case of *Cæreba wellsii* the eggs are exactly alike.¹

In the genus *Cæreba* no two species are known to inhabit the same locality.

In certain mammals (for example, *Canis occidentalis* Rich., *Vulpes fulvus* Desm., and *Sciurus carolinensis* Gmel.) melanistic

¹ I have never seen the eggs of the normal form of *C. atrata*.

forms are common, and sometimes occur only in restricted portions of the habitat of the species, as in the case of the black phase of one of these Honey Creepers (*C. wellsi*). A rather interesting and somewhat similar phenomenon is shown in the females of the American swallow-tailed butterfly (*Papilio glaucus* Linn.) which are yellow like the males in the northern part of the range of the species, but sooty black in the south.

In the case of these Honey Creepers, the black colored birds, possessing a well marked dominance over those of normal color, have gradually increased in proportion, until the typical phase has been practically eliminated from those islands on which the black phase occurs.

As the evidence seems to show that these two black Honey Creepers are conspecific with the normal forms inhabiting the same islands, the species on St. Vincent must be known as *Cæreba atrata* (LAWR.),¹ that name having page precedence over *C. saccharina* (LAWR.),² applied to the bird in the normal phase of plumage. The Grenada species must stand as *Cæreba wellsi* (CORY).³

The two birds with their synonymy and distribution are as follows:—

***Cæreba atrata* (LAWR.). St. Vincent.**

Normal form.

MOLASSES BIRD; SUCRIER; YELLOW BREAST.

- Certhiola saccharina* LAWRE., Ann. N. Y. Acad. Sci., Vol. I, p. 151 (1878); LAWRE., Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., Vol. I, pp. 190, 487 (1878); CORY, List Birds W. I., p. 9 (1885); RIDGW., Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., Vol. VIII, pp. 28, 30 (1885); CORY, Auk, Vol. III, p. 50 (1886); Birds W. I., p. 64 (1889); SCL., Cat. Birds Brit. Mus., Vol. XI, p. 42 (1886); [CLARK], W. I. Bull., Vol. V, p. 86 [1904].
- Cæreba saccharina* CORY, Auk, Vol. VIII, p. 39 (1891); Cat. W. I. Birds, pp. 17, 116, 134 (1892); RIDGW., Birds No. & Mid. Am., Vol. II, p. 415 (1902); MAYN., Cat. Birds W. I., p. 26, No. 249 (1903).

¹ Lawrence, Ann. N. Y. Acad. Sci., Vol. I, 1878, p. 150.

² Lawrence, Ann. N. Y. Acad. Sci., Vol. I, 1878, p. 151.

³ Cory, Auk, Vol. VI, 1889, p. 219.

Formerly not uncommon in the vicinity of Kingstown and the immediate windward district of St. Vincent, but now exceedingly rare, if not actually extinct.

Black Form.

BLACKBIRD.

- Certhiola atrata* LAWR., Ann. N. Y. Acad. Sci., Vol. I, p. 150 (1878); Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., Vol. I, pp. 190, 487 (1878); LISTER, Ibis, 1880, p. 40; SALV. & GODM., Biol. Cent. Am., Aves, Vol. I, p. 250 (1883); RIDGW., Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., Vol. VIII, pp. 28, 30 (1885); CORY, Auk, Vol. III, p. 53 (1886); Ibis, 1886, p. 473; SCL., Cat. Birds Brit. Mus., Vol. XI, p. 47 (1886); CORY, Birds W. I., p. 67 (1889); RENDALL, Zoölogist, 1897, p. 447; NICOLL, Ibis, 1904, p. 563; [CLARK], W. I. Bull., Vol. V, p. 86 [1904].
- Cæreba atrata* CORY, Auk, Vol. VIII, p. 40 (1891); Cat. W. I. Birds, pp. 17, 116, 134 (1892); RIDGW., Birds No. & Mid. Am., Vol. II, p. 422 (1902). MAYN., Cat. Birds W. I., p. 25, No. 245 (1903).

Abundant all over the island of St. Vincent.

***Cæreba wellsii* (Cory).** Grenadines and Grenada.

*Normal Form.*¹

LOUIS D'OR; SUCHIER.

- Certhiola* sp. LAWR., Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., Vol. I, p. 278 (1878).
- Certhiola atrata* (!) LAWR., Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., Vol. I, p. 269 (1878).
- Certhiola saccharina* RIDGW., Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., Vol. VIII, pp. 28, 30 (1885); CORY, Auk, Vol. III, p. 50 (1886); SCL., Cat. Birds Brit. Mus., Vol. XI, p. 42 (1886); WELLS & LAWR., Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., Vol. XI, p. 613 (1886); CORY, Birds W. I., p. 64 (1889); [CLARK], W. I. Bull., Vol. V, p. 86 [1904] (Grenadines).
- Cæreba saccharina* CORY, Cat. W. I. Birds, pp. 17, 116, 134 (1892); WELLS, Auk, Vol. XIX, p. 348 (1902); Birds Carriacou, Grenada Handb., 1904, p. 150, No. 69; RIDGW., Birds No. & Mid. Am., Vol. II, p. 415, and footnote (1902).

The normal phase of plumage of *C. wellsii* is exceedingly rare on Grenada. Mr. Wells, who lived nearly all his life on the island,

¹ *Certhiola godmani* Cory (Auk, Vol. VI, p. 219, 1889) was founded on a specimen of *Cæreba tuleola* (Cab.) taken on Grenada.

never met with one, and the only authentic specimen known to me is one which was shot near Point Saline in the spring of 1904 by Mr. Charles Vernet of St. George's, who very kindly presented it to me. He informed me that, although he has collected birds for a number of years at Grenada, he never saw but this one example. It is identical with a large number of others obtained by myself on the Grenadines.

On the small islands between Grenada and St. Vincent, this form is very abundant; in fact it is one of the commonest birds. It occurs on Bequia, Battowia, Balliceaux, Mustique, Canouan, Mayreau, Union Island, Prune Island, Frigate Rock, Petit Martinique, Tobago Keys, Carriacou (and neighboring islets), and Isle Ronde (with outlying keys).

Specimens of normal *C. wellsii* differ from normally colored *C. atrata* from St. Vincent in being smaller, with a shorter and weaker bill (just as the black forms from the two islands differ), and they are not so dark above.

Black Form.

BLACK SEE SEE.

Certhiola wellsii CORY, Auk, Vol. VI, p. 219 (1889); [WELLS], Birds Grenada, Grenada Handb., 1904, p. 147, No. 12.

Certhiola atrata LAWR., Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., Vol. I, pp. 269, 487 (1878); RIDGW., Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus., Vol. VIII, pp. 28, 30 (1885); CORY, List Birds W. I., p. 9 (1885); Auk, Vol. III, p. 53 (1886); SCL., Cat. Birds Brit. Mus., Vol. XI, p. 47 (1886); WELLS & LAWR., Proc. U. S. Nat. Mus. Vol. IX, p. 612 (1886); CORY, Birds W. I., p. 67 (1889).

Abundant all over the island of Grenada, to which island it is confined.