

8, and ♂ Jan. 19, 1912, shot at a point about seven miles up the river from Brownsville, establishes this species as a resident. Of the nine or ten forms of Herons ranging into the Lower Valley, it is the most thinly distributed.

An immature Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) sex unknown, was shot near San Benito, Tex., 19 miles N. W. from Brownsville, early in January, 1912, by H. N. Prentiss. It was mounted and is now on exhibition at a drugstore in Brownsville, labeled as *Mexican Eagle*. The nearest locality known to me where this species occurs as a resident, is in the mountains, some distance south of Monterey, Mexico, approximately 200 miles distant.

On Jan. 4, 1912, I secured near Brownsville an adult female Long-eared Owl (*Asio wilsonianus*) my first record here.

Several years ago (Nov. 1909), I felt certain I had espied a Green-tailed Towhee (*Oreospiza chlorura*) on the ground in the dense chaparral. Now I feel sure that my identification was correct, for on Jan. 7, 1912, I collected an adult female near Brownsville. It may prove to be a more or less common winter visitant, for it is easy to confound it with the Texas Sparrow (*Arremonops rufivirgatus rufivirgatus*) in life. Its superficial appearance in life, and its habits, closely resemble those of the latter, although the Green-tailed Towhee is a much more confiding bird.

The Western Tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*) is again wintering in small numbers. I secured an adult male on Dec. 12, 1911, for specific date. Last year it was noted through the winter months up to March. Several examples secured here during winter of 1910-11 are in the collection of Dr. J. Dwight, Jr.—AUSTIN PAUL SMITH, *Brownsville, Texas*.

**The Names "Purple Finch," "Mavis," and "Highole."**—In my article on The Current English Names of North American Birds ('The Auk,' Vol. XXVI, Oct. 1909, p. 358) I referred to the name "Purple" as applied to *Carpodacus purpureus* as "a monumental witness of an inability to properly discriminate either between two very different shades of color or in the use of the right word." The species in question appears under this name in Catesby (Nat. Hist. of Carolina, Vol. I, p. 41). From the letter of a correspondent under date of May 1, 1911, I quote the following—"I copied some of your article and had it printed in a Worcester, Mass., paper—The Telegram, using your name and giving you the credit of it. In yesterday's paper a Webster, Mass., bird-lover takes exception to the statement that the Purple Finch is wrongly named as to color, saying that it is the color of Tyrian purple, and evidently meaning that it was named for an ancient or classic color, and not the modern purple. Do you agree to this?"—I certainly do agree to it, and I wrote my correspondent thanking her for the correction. The gorgeous Tyrian purple, a dye obtained from certain gastropod molluscs (*Purpura* and *Murex*), was a symbol of wealth and rank among the early peoples of the eastern Mediterranean. In Murray (The Oxford Dictionary) under the word "purple" there is this definition—"Tyrian purple, which was actually crimson,

in the middle ages applied vaguely to many shades of red, now applied to mixture of red and blue in various proportions, usually containing also some black or white or both, approaching on the one side to crimson and on the other to violet." The Purple Finch was therefore appropriately named though approaching to crimson, while the Purple Grackle and the Purple Martin were equally well named though approaching to violet. My notion of "purple" evidently inclines to the violet.

In this letter my correspondent also says—"I used to hear the Wood Thrush called the 'red Mavis' at Framingham, Mass., where I spent my childhood." This is interesting as indicating a possible transit of the name with some early colonists and its local survival.

In Newton's "Dictionary of Birds" I find the following in a footnote under "Woodpecker"—"The number of English names, ancient and modern, by which these birds are known is very great, and even a bare list of them could not be here given. The Anglo-Saxon was *Higera* or *Higere*, and to this may plausibly be traced 'Hickwall,' nowadays used in some parts of the country, and the older 'Hickway,' corrupted first into 'High-haw,' and, after its original meaning was lost, into 'Hewhole,' which in North America has been still further corrupted into 'Highhole' and more recently into 'High-holder.'"—SPENCER TROTTER, *Swarthmore College, Penn.*

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## RECENT LITERATURE.

**Ridgway's Birds of North and Middle America. Part V.**<sup>1</sup>—This long delayed volume forming Part V of Mr. Ridgway's great work appeared November 29, 1911, but was not generally distributed until more than a month later. It comprises the remaining Passerine families, Pteroptochidæ (1 species), Formicariidæ (66 species and subspecies), Furnariidæ (29),

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<sup>1</sup>The Birds | of North and Middle America | a Descriptive Catalogue | of the | Higher Groups, Genera, Species, and Subspecies of Birds | known to occur in North America, from the | Arctic Lands to the Isthmus of Panama | the West Indies and other Islands | of the Caribbean Sea, and the | Galapagos Archipelago | by | Robert Ridgway | Curator, Division of birds.

Part V. | Family Pteroptochidæ — The Tapaculos Family Dendrocolaptidæ — The Woodhewers | Family Formicariidæ — The Antbirds Family Trochilidæ — The Humming Birds | Family Furnariidæ — The Ovenbirds Family Micropodidæ — The Swifts | Family Trogonidæ — The Trogons | — | Washington: | Government Printing Office. | 1911. = Bulletin of the United States National Museum. No. 50. Part V. — 8vo. pp. i-xxiii + 1-859, pls. i-xxxiii.