

## EARLY RECORDS OF THE CAROLINA PAROQUET.

BY ALBERT HAZEN WRIGHT.

ALMOST our only ornithologic sources of the earlier times in North America are historical annals, quaint narratives of exploration, and travellers' sketches. In those days, the number of *real* naturalists may have been many, yet they seldom recorded their observations in scientific form; and our resident scientists were few. Hence, if we would form any idea of the primitive conditions and species, we must perforce use what we have at hand, however diverse our respective evaluations of their trustworthiness. The average biologist, as he reads early North American travels, cannot but marvel at the intense interest of our predecessors in birds, now rare, near-extinct or extinct. The flocking of the Passenger Pigeon, the size and flavor of the Wild Turkey, the gorgeous plumage and surprising northern range of the Carolina Paroquet, or equally peculiar characters or habits of other forms, now fast disappearing, were in such bold relief, so obvious and so patent as to attract the attention of any layman whatever his mission.

Probably none of these forms caused more genuine amazement than the Paroquet (*Conuroopsis carolinensis*), particularly in the northern limits of its range. Of its previous distribution, Hasbrouck in his monograph of this form says,<sup>1</sup> "we find that of the forty-four States and five Territories comprising our country, there are records of the occurrence of this species in twenty-two States and one Territory, over which it formerly ranged. If we take the forty-third parallel as the northern limit, the twenty-sixth as the most southern, the seventy-third and one hundred and sixth meridians as the eastern and western boundaries respectively, we will have included very nearly all the country in which the Paroquet formerly lived." In his introductory remarks he notes that "For many years it has been a recognized fact that the Carolina Paroquet (*Conurus carolinensis*) is fast approaching extermination, the last quarter of a century having witnessed such rapid diminution in its numbers and so great a restriction in its range that, 'in the opinion

---

<sup>1</sup> 'The Auk', Vol. VIII, No. 4, Oct., 1891, pp. 371, 369.

of the best judges, twenty years hence it will be known only in history and from museum specimens.'” Has the prophecy been fulfilled? Just previous to this communication (1888-1889) Chapman records <sup>1</sup> it in Eastern Florida, and reports more or less authentic indicate its presence in Oklahoma. Two years later (1891) Merriam gives <sup>2</sup> an isolated record of it in Southern Missouri, and Wayne <sup>3</sup> and Scott <sup>4</sup> record it from North and South Florida respectively. The last apparent notice of this form in the flesh is that of Chapman <sup>5</sup> for 1904 when he finds it still present about Lake Okeechabee, Florida.

In this state, the first records begin in 1587, when Laudonniere in “The Description of the West Indies in generall, but chiefly and particularly of Florida” says, <sup>6</sup> “The foules are Turkeycocks, Partridges, Parrots . . . .” Four years preceding (1583), Sir George Peckham in “A true Report of the late discoveries — of the New-found Lands, By that valiant and worthy Gentleman Sir Humfrey Gilbert,” holds that explorers in North America <sup>7</sup> “doe testifie that they have found in those countreyes . . . ; Parrots.” About the same time (1587), Thomas Hariot in speaking “Of Foule” of Virginia, writes, <sup>8</sup> “There are also Parrots . . . , which although with us they be not used for meat, yet for other causes I thought good to mention.” The final note of the sixteenth century comes in Daniel Coxe’s *Carolana* (Louisiana). He sent his first expedition up the Mississippi in 1598. He finds <sup>9</sup> “great companies of turkeys, . . . parrots, and many other sorts of curious birds differing from ours.”

The roll of records for the seventeenth century begins with Captain John Smith who finds (1607-1609) in Virginia that <sup>10</sup> “In

<sup>1</sup> Proc. Linnaean Soc. of New York, 1890, pp. 4-6.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Auk', Vol. IX, p. 301.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. XII, p. 367.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, IX, p. 218.

<sup>5</sup> Bird-Lore, Vol. VI, No. 3, June 1, 1904, p. 103.

<sup>6</sup> Hakluyt, Richard. *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation.* Hakluyt Soc. Extra Series, Vol. XVIII, p. 451. Glasgow, 1904.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 369, 370.

<sup>9</sup> Hist. Colls. of Louisiana. By B. F. French. Part II, Phila., 1850, p. 261.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, Capt. John, etc., *Works of, 1608-1631.* Edited by Edward Arber, 1884, p. 60.

Winter there are great plenty of . . . Parrats, . . .". About the same time Wm. Strachey's curious "Histoire of Travaile into Virginia" (1610?-1612?) appears. Of the "Parakitoes," he writes,<sup>1</sup> "I have seene manie in the winter, and knowe divers killed, yet be they a fowle most swift of wing, their winges and breasts are of a greenish cullour, with forked tayles, their heads, some crymsen, some yellowe, some orange-tawny, very beautifull. Some of our colonie who have seene of the East Indian parratts, affirme how they are like to that kynd, which hath given us somewhat the more hope of the nerenes of the South Sea, these parratts, by all probability, like enough to come from some of the cuntryes upon that sea." In 1615, Ralph Hamor in the same region observes<sup>2</sup> "in winter about Christmas many flocks of *Parakertoths*."

The same year, 1615, Champlain, when just north of Lake Ontario,<sup>3</sup> "lost (his) way in the woods, having followed a certain bird that seemed to (him) peculiar. It had a beak like that of a parrot, and was of the size of a hen. It was entirely yellow except the head which was red, and the wings which were blue, and it flew by intervals like a partridge. The desire to kill it led (him) to pursue it from tree to tree for a very long time, until it flew away in good earnest," — a description which might suggest the paroquet. It is much later, 1649, in "A Perfect Description of Virginia" that "Parrots" next appear.<sup>4</sup> The Jesuit Relations yield four short notes. The Relations of 1661-62 in speaking of Kentucky or Tennessee, observe that in the fruit trees,<sup>5</sup> "birds of all colors and of every note, especially little Paroquets, which are so numerous that we have seen some of our Iroquois return from those countries with scarfs and belts which they had made from these birds by a process of interweaving," Some ten years later (1673) Dablon finds, on the lower Mississippi, that<sup>6</sup> "Parroquets fly in flocks of 10 to 12." Finally, the "Voyages du P. Jacques Mar-

---

<sup>1</sup> Hakluyt Soc., London, 1849, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Hamor, Ralph. *A True Discourse of the Present Estate of Virginia*, etc. London, 1615. Reprint, Richmond, 1860, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Champlain, *Voyages of, 1611-1618*. Vol. 3. Prince Soc. Publications, Vol. 13, 1882, p. 140.

<sup>4</sup> Mass. Hist. Soc. Coll. Second Ser., Vol. IX, 1822, p. 121.

<sup>5</sup> *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*. By R. G. Thwaites and others, 1896, Vol. 47, p. 147.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 58, p. 99.

quette" (1673-1677) mentions this form in two places. Of his experiences on the Mississippi near the mouth of St. Francis River in Arkansas, we read,<sup>1</sup> "We killed a little paroquet, one half of whose head was red, The other half and The neck yellow, and The whole body green." The other quotation speaks of the Mississippi at the 38th degree of latitude.<sup>4</sup> "We have seen nothing like this river that we enter, as regards its fertility of soil, its prairies and woods; its . . . . parroquets, . . . ."

In 1663 some "Commissioners sent from Barbodes to explore the River Cape Fear," report,<sup>2</sup> "in the woods, great flocks of paroquitos," as does William Hilton in the same region the succeeding year (1664). He writes that<sup>3</sup> "in that time as our business called us up and down the River and Branches, we kill'd . . . three dozen of Parrakeeto's." About 1677, Rev. Andrew White in "A Relation of the Colony of Lord Baron of Baltimore, in Maryland, near Virginia, etc." records,<sup>4</sup> that "During the winter it abounds in . . . parrots, and many others unknown to our parts of the world." Five years later (1682) both Samuel Wilson and T. Ashe note this species in Carolina. The former says,<sup>5</sup> "Here are also in the woods, great plenty of . . . Paraquetos"; the latter finds the<sup>5</sup> "Birds for Food, and pleasure of Game, are . . . and Parakeittoes." Two years before the end of the century, L. Hennepin when at the Head of the Illinois River, observes,<sup>6</sup> "Parrots" "in that country," and then again along the Mississippi where<sup>6</sup> "The Country affords all sorts of Game, as . . . Parrots, . . . ."

In the eighteenth century the number of records exceeds those of the two preceding centuries combined. Almost at its beginning (1702), Holm in "A Short Description of the Province of New Sweden," notes,<sup>7</sup> "Parrats." In 1714 the celebrated Lawson

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. 59, pp. 149-151, 161.

<sup>2</sup> Hawks, Francis L. *History of North Carolina*. Fayetteville, N. C., Vol. II, 1858, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Hilton, Wm. *A Relation of a Discovery lately made on the coast of Florida, etc.* Force, Peter. *Tracts and Other Papers*. Wash., D. C., Vol. IV, 1846, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Force, Peter. *ibid.*, Vol. IV, 1846, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Carroll, B. R. *Hist. Colls. S. C.* New York, 1836, Vol. II, pp. 28, 73.

<sup>6</sup> Hennepin, L. *A New Discovery of a Vast Country in America*. London, 1698, pp. 93, 94.

<sup>7</sup> *Mem. Hist. Soc. Penn.*, Vol. III, p. 41 (Part I).

speaks of this form in three different places. In the first place he gives the statement of Hilton (1664) above; the second is to include it in his list of "Birds of Carolina"; and the last note characterizes it as follows:<sup>1</sup> "The parrakeetos are of a green color, and orange colored half way their head. Of these and the alligators, there is none found to the northward of this province. They visit us first when mulberries are ripe, which fruit they love extremely. They peck the apples to eat the kernels, so that the fruit rots and perishes. They are mischievous to orchards. They are often taken alive and will become familiar and tame in two days. They have their nests in hollow trees, in low swampy ground. They devour the birch buds in April, and lie hidden when the weather is frosty and hard."

Following Lawson comes William Byrd who discusses (1729) it in connection with apple growing<sup>2</sup> "The Truth is, there is one Inconvenience that easily discourages lazy People from making This improvement: very often, in Autumn, when the Apples begin to ripen, they are visited with numerous flight of paraqueets, that bite all the Fruit to pieces in a moment for the sake of the kernels. The Havock they make is Sometimes so great, that whole Orchards are laid waste in Spite of all the Noises that can be made, or Mawkins that can be dresst up, to fright 'em away. These Ravenous Birds visit North Carolina only during the warm Season, and so soon as the Cold begins to come on, retire back towards the Sun. They rarely Venture so far north as Virginia, except in a very hot Summer, when they visit the most Southern Parts of it. They are very Beautiful; but like some other pretty Creatures, are apt to be loud and mischievous." In 1734 Mr. Commissary Von Reck, who "conducted the First Transport of Saltzburgers to Georgia," writes (Apr. 22) that when at Ebenezeer on Savannah River,<sup>3</sup> "Parrots and Partridges make us here a very good Dish." In the "History and General Description of New France" 1744, Charlevoix merely mentions<sup>4</sup> "Parrots" in Florida.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lawson, John. *The History of Carolina, etc.* London, 1714. Reprinted, Raleigh, 1860, pp. 125, 222, 234.

<sup>2</sup> Byrd, William. *History of the Dividing Line and Other Tracts.* Richmond, 1866, Vol. I, p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> Force, Peter. *ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Shea, J. G. *Translation of.* New York, 1866, Vol. I, p. 140.

In another quarter (Louisiana), the memoirs of M. Dumont (1753) finds<sup>1</sup> "The paroquets are very common . . . , where they are about the size of a pigeon and of one color decidedly green. The head is very large, and the beak is like all the other birds of their sort, except it is bordered on both sides entirely to the top of the head by a sort of bow of yellowish color mixed with a little very brilliant red plume, less red in the females than the males. These birds fly ordinarily in flocks of eighteen or twenty; and when they pass in rapid flight, they utter screams loud enough to deafen the ears. When they are shot and eaten, the flesh is dark. When they are eating the seed of those *appe mace* of which I have spoken and of which I have said that they are very fond, if after having killed them one gives the refuse to cats, it kills them. "In the Ohio River region, John Jennings in his "Journal from Fort Pitt to Fort Chartes in the Illinois Country"<sup>2</sup> on March 13, 1766, "saw several Parrotkites" at Little Tottery Creek; the day following at Scioto River, "saw some parotkites"; on great Mineami River, "saw several flocks of Parrotkites"; and lastly, on the Mississippi just above the Ohio River's mouth, recorded the same. In 1766-1768 Carver finds<sup>3</sup> "Parrots" in the interior parts of North America. In 1772-1773 Rev. David Jones says<sup>4</sup> that as you approach the Ohio River region from the east, "after you go near the Great Kanawha, large flocks of small green parrots are to be seen."

"The Parroquet of Louisiana," M. LePage DuPratz thinks<sup>5</sup> "is not quite so large as those that are usually brought to France. Its plumage is usually of a fine sea-green, with a pale rose-coloured spot upon the crown, which brightens into red towards the beak, and fades off into green towards the body. It is, with difficulty that it learns to speak, and even then it rarely practices it, resembling in this the natives themselves, who speak little. As a silent parrot would never make its fortune among our French

<sup>1</sup> *Memoires Historiques Sur La Louisiane.* Paris, 1753, Tome Premier. p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> *Penn. Mag. of Hist. and Biography.* Vol. 31, 1907, pp. 146, 147, 148, 152.

<sup>3</sup> Carver, J. *Travels through the Interior Parts of North America, in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768.* London, 1778, p. 466.

<sup>4</sup> Jones, Horatio G. *Journal of Rev. David Jones.* In *Cincinnati Miscellany,* by Chas. Cist. Vol. II, p. 232.

<sup>5</sup> DuPratz, M. Le Page. *The History of Louisiana.* London edit. 1774, p. 278.

ladies, it is doubtless on this account that we see so few of these in France." Following DuPratz, are three short notices. In 1776, "The History of North America" (London, 1776, p. 251), "With regard to the winged species" of Florida, remarks, "Here are vast numbers of . . . , parrots, . . . In his Notes written in 1781, Jefferson merely mentions<sup>1</sup> "*Psittacus Carolinensis*. The Parrot of Carolina. Perroquet." in one place; in the other, it is only incidentally that he speaks of it. In speaking of the climate of the Mississippi valley, he says,<sup>1</sup> "if we may believe travellers, it becomes warmer there than it is in the same latitude on the sea side. Their testimony is strengthened by the vegetables and animals which subsist and multiply there naturally, and do not on our coast. . . . Perroquets even winter on the Sciota, in the 39th degree of latitude." Three years later, 1784, John Filson just notes<sup>2</sup> "the perroquet, a bird every way resembling a parrot but much smaller";

In 1791, William Bartram writes of it at considerable length. While speaking of *Cupressus disticha* (Cypress), he says,<sup>3</sup> "Paroquets are commonly seen hovering and fluttering on their tops: they delight to shell the balls, its seed being their favorite food." In his list of birds, he gives "*Psittacus Caroliniensis*, the parrot of Carolina or parrakeet." "These are natives of Carolina and Florida where they breed and continue the year round." "The parakeet (*psiticus caroliniensis*) never reach so far North as Pennsylvania, which to me is unaccountable, considering they are a bird of such singular rapid flight, they could easily perform the journey in ten or twelve hours from North Carolina, where they are very numerous, and we abound with all the fruits which they delight in."

"I was assured in Carolina, that these birds, for a month or two in the coldest winter weather, house themselves in hollow Cypress trees, clinging fast to each other like bees in a hive, where they continue in a torpid state until the warmth of the returning spring reanimates them, when they issue forth from their late dark, cold

---

<sup>1</sup> Jefferson, Thomas. Notes of the State of Virginia. 1825, p. 97, 107.

<sup>2</sup> Filson, John. The Discovery, Settlement and present State of Kentucky, etc. Wilmington, 1784, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Bartram, William. Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, etc. Phila., 1791, pp. 91, 92, 289, 290, 301.

winter cloisters. But I lived several years in North Carolina and never was witness to an instance of it, yet I do not at all doubt but there have been instances of belated flocks thus forced into such shelter, and the extraordinary severity and perseverance of the season might have benumbed them into a torpid sleepy state; but that they all willingly should yield to so disagreeable and hazardous a situation, does not seem reasonable or natural, when we consider that they are a bird of the swiftest flight and impatient of severe cold. They are easily tamed, when they become docile and familiar, but never learn to imitate the human language."

Before the end of the century, several travellers in quick succession furnish items of interest. In the reminiscences of O. M. Spencer of Hamilton Co., Ohio, we read that <sup>1</sup> "In April (1792) . . . Flock of parraquets were seen, decked in their rich plumage of green and gold." The same year, John Heckewelder in his journey to the Wabash when he arrives at its mouth, finds <sup>2</sup> "The noise of the many paroquets (a small kind of parrot) was dreadful and not attuned to (his) ears." In 1793, Imlay only lists the <sup>3</sup> "Perroquet" with its Linnæan designation, "Psittacus." In 1794, Loskiel (thinking primarily of the Ohio region) writes, <sup>4</sup> "A few green *Parrots* (psittacus) are seen in the woods in summer, but are in greater numbers further to the south." In the Mississippi valley, Jan. 1, 1796, André Michaux when at Little River, enumerates among the <sup>5</sup> "Birds: . . . ; green Parroquets with yellow heads of the small species; . . ." At the end of this century or the beginning of the next, John Davis, on a journey from Charleston, S. C., to Coosahatchie in one of many shooting excursions in the woods, writes, <sup>6</sup> "once we brought down some paroquets that were directing their course over our heads to *Georgia*."

<sup>1</sup> Howe, Henry Hist. Colls. of Ohio. 2nd edit. Cincinnati, 1847, p. 230.

<sup>2</sup> Penn. Mag. of Hist. and Biog. Vol. XII, p. 166.

<sup>3</sup> Imlay, George. A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America, etc. 2nd edit. London, 1793, p. 237.

<sup>4</sup> Loskiel, George Henry. History of the Mission of the United Brethren among the Indians in North America. In three parts. Transl. by C. I. La Trobe. London, 1794 (original 1788), p. 92.

<sup>5</sup> Early Western Travels, 1748-1846. Edited by R. G. Thwaites. Cleveland, O., 1904, Vol. III, p. 83.

<sup>6</sup> Davis, John. Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America during 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801, and 1802. London, 1803, N. Y. edit., by A. J. Morrison, 1909, p. 91.



In the earlier half of the nineteenth century many of the travelers in North America record the presence of the paroquet. Capt. Matthew Phelps when "Among the wild fowl" of the Mississippi River, says,<sup>1</sup> "I observed . . . paroquets . . ." At Christmas camp, Dec. 25, 1806, near Brown Canon, Colo. (near source of Arkansas river, and 7 miles above Salida which is also above the Grand Canon of the Arkansas) Capt. Zebulon M. Pike<sup>2</sup> "Caught a bird of a new species (*Conurus carolinensis*) having made a trap for him. This bird is of a green color, almost the size of a quail, had a small tuft on its head like a pheasant, and was of a carnivorous species; it differed from any bird we ever saw in the United States. We kept him with us in a small wicker cage, feeding him on meat, until I left the interpreter on the Arkansas, with whom I left it. We at one time took a companion of the same species and put them in the same cage, when the first resident never ceased attacking the stranger until he killed him." The same year, Priscilla Wakefield (at St. Juans, Florida) in discussing the cypress where the eagles fix their nests, notes that<sup>3</sup> "paroquets, venture to approach the royal bird, and often perch on these inaccessible branches. The paroquets are allured by the seeds which are their favorite repast." In 1807 George Heriot claims<sup>4</sup> that "parrots" are of "the birds of the southern parts of Canada," and that "The northern parts of Canada are visited in the milder seasons by . . . , parrots, . . ." The following year, the Travels of the hated Thomas Ashe come out. When on a trip to the Great Miami, he records the paroquet but at the end of his note shows his exaggerative skill. He says,<sup>5</sup> "During the repast I was entertained by the chattering of a flock of paroquets, who had taken up their abode in the trees around me. They were the green and the red neck, that very particular species which are held the most

---

<sup>1</sup> Phelps, Capt. Matthew. *Memoirs and Adventures of*. By Anthony Haswell. Bennington, Vt., 1802, p. 55 (Appendix).

<sup>2</sup> Pike, Zebulon Montgomery, *The Expeditions of, During the Years 1805-6-7*. New edit. by Elliot Coues. 3 vols. N. Y. 1895, Vol. II, p. 474.

<sup>3</sup> Wakefield, Priscilla. *Excursions in North America, etc.* London, 1806, p. 95.

<sup>4</sup> Heriot, George. *Travels through the Canadas, etc.* London, 1807, pp. 516, 517.

<sup>5</sup> Ashe, Thomas. *Travels in America Performed in 1806, etc.* London, 1808, p. 224.

rare in Europe, and which were once highly valued by the Greeks and Romans.”

In 1810 we have two references. Schultz at New Orleans writes that <sup>1</sup> “Those (birds) which may be considered as local are, . . . paroquets, . . .” These “Parroquets are so well known to you that any description of them would be unnecessary. One good quality they possess with which you are perhaps unacquainted: a dozen of them make a most delicious sea-pie.” The other note of this year, comes when Cuming opposite Portsmouth (Ohio) on the Virginia side,<sup>2</sup> “observed here, vast numbers of beautiful large green paroquets, which our landlord, squire Brown, informed us abound all over the country. They keep in *flocks*, and when they alight on a tree, they are not distinguishable from the foliage, from their colour.”

The next decade furnishes at least eight different writers who remark of the paroquet. The first, David Thomas, a botanist and later engineer in the construction of the western division of the Erie Canal gives it more attention than any other North American bird. He writes of his first acquaintance with this form as follows:<sup>3</sup> “As we approached the banks of *Indian Kentucky*, hearing shrill screams over our heads, we looked up, and first saw the paroquet. These birds, which are about the size of wild pigeons, are sometimes seen on the Miami.” In a footnote he gives, “Drake says on the Sciota.” When near Lost River and Lick Creek, Ohio, he says, “The paroquet commits depredations on the wheat in harvest, but it is a bird of uncommon beauty. The head is red, the neck yellow, and the body a light green.” At French Licks (sulphur springs with salt in them) he finds, “This place is the favorite residence of the paroquet, flocks of which were continually flying round. These birds seem to delight in screaming.” At Vincennes, Ind., he remarks of their association with cottonwoods. “A small cotton wood tree stands opposite to the window where I am writing, dark excrescences on its branches like those which appear on

<sup>1</sup> Schultz, Christian. *Travels on an Inland Voyage through the States of New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee*, etc. New York. 2 vols. 1810 pp. 182, 184, 185.

<sup>2</sup> Cuming, F. *Sketches of a Tour to the Western Country, through the States of Ohio and Kentucky*; etc. Pittsburgh, 1810, p. 141.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas, David. *Travels through the Western Country in the Summer of 1816*, etc. Auburn, N. Y. 1819, pp. 115, 133, 135, 160, 210, 307.

this species in the western parts of New York. It is well known that these blemishes are produced by the irritation of insects;—first by a puncture when the egg is deposited, and afterwards by the growth and motion of the worm. To procure this food, the *parroquets* have been busily employed, at times, through the day: but though they have become so familiar; and though they excel all the birds of this country in beauty of plumage,—their scream is so discordant, and their fierceness of disposition so apparent, as to preclude every sensation of attachment. These birds build their nests in hollow trees. The strength of their necks is remarkable; and we are assured that when both wings and feet are tied they can climb trees by striking their bills into the bark.” In the Wabash region, he observes that, “On the approach of any large bird the *Parroquets* immediately commence flying round and round in flocks, screaming most hideously. In this way, they escape the hawk.” His last note is a quotation from “Topographical Description of the State of Ohio, etc.” It is, “The green paroquet with a yellow crown, a species of parrot, is very common. It has a harsh unpleasant note, and although easily tamed, it cannot be taught to imitate the human voice. The habits of these birds in some respects, are singular. They are always seen in flocks, which retire at night into hollow trees, where they *suspend themselves by their bills*. These birds also retreat to hollow trees in winter. There have been found, after a severe winter, prodigious numbers in a large tree, filling the whole cavity, where they had perished by the severity of the cold.”

In 1815, the above mentioned Daniel Drake in discussing the climate of Ohio takes exception to the opinion of Jefferson, that “the Ohio-countries (are) warmer, in the same parallels, than the Atlantic states.” He says <sup>1</sup> “much reliance is placed on the growth and residence, in this country, of certain plants and animals, which in the maritime states are, it is said, not found as far north by several degrees. Of the former Mr. Jefferson has cited the reed and catalpa; of the latter, the parakeet. . . . This bird, it is true, resides constantly along the Mississippi, Ohio, and their tributary rivers, as far north as 39° 30', and is seen occasionally up to 42°.

---

<sup>1</sup> Drake, Daniel. *Natural and Statistical View, or Picture of Cincinnati and the Miami Country, etc.* Cincinnati, 1815, pp. 115, 118, 119.

But it is a well ascertained fact, that the climate of these latitudes is much colder than that of places in the Atlantic states, where this bird is rarely seen. There must be causes, therefore, for its higher latitude in this country, that are not connected with climate. One of these, Professor Barton suggests, is the southern course of our great rivers. If this bird, as most of its family still are, was originally an inhabitant of the tropics, it must have migrated into the depths of this region, along the Mississippi and Ohio. The wide alluvial vallies of these rivers, it is observed by the late ingenious and lamented Alexander Wilson, abound in the favorite food of this bird; such as the fruit of the cockle burr (*xanthium strumarium* L), cypress, hackberry, beech and sycamore, most of which are rare or unproductive in Pennsylvania. To these, the same distinguished Ornithologist remarks, may be added the salines or salt licks of this country, about which he never failed to see flocks of paroquets. Finding a region abundantly stored with agreeable food, this bird long since became its permanent inhabitant; and acquired hardness of constitution sufficient to enjoy good health, where the average heat of some months in winter is seven degrees below the freezing point. In the Atlantic states, the rivers flow east or south-east. In advancing towards Pennsylvania, therefore, this bird cannot travel *along*, but must *cross* their vallies; a movement which it has no inducement to make, and hence it generally stops among the cypress swamps of North Carolina and southern Virginia."

In the Illinois country in 1817, Samuel R. Brown finds<sup>1</sup> "paroquets . . . abound in the same numbers as in other parts of the western country." He records it in Louisiana and speaks of the Mississippi as the place where "The traveller finds himself in the proper region of the paroquets . . ." When on Patoka river, Indiana, Elias Pym Fordham, Dec. 8, 1817 complainingly writes that<sup>2</sup> "He saw a large herd of deer, but killed nothing but a parroquet." The next year, in Tennessee along the Mississippi, Estwick Evans<sup>3</sup> sees the paroquet. It "is smaller, and more beautiful

---

<sup>1</sup> Brown, S. R. The Western Gazetteer. Auburn, 1817, pp. 31, 146, 233.

<sup>2</sup> Fordham, E. P. Personal Narrative of, etc 1817-1818. Edited by F. A. Ogg. Cleveland, O., 1906, p. 138.

<sup>3</sup> Evans, Estwick. A Pedestrious Tour, of Four Thousand Miles through the Western States and Territories during the Winter and Spring of 1818, etc. Concord, N. H., 1819, p. 200.

than the common parrot. They go in flocks, and their notes are rapid, harsh, and incessant. It is remarkable, that this bird is subject to a disease resembling apoplexy." In Warden's Account (1819), the paroquet is given as an inhabitant of Tennessee, where <sup>1</sup> "Parroquets frequent the salt licks," in Illinois, and in Mississippi where "Parroquets are seen as high as the Bayou Pierre stream of the Mississippi."

The same year Schoolcraft gives this interesting résumé of the species under discussion.<sup>2</sup> "The *parakeet* is a beautiful bird; it is a kind of parrot; its colours are green, yellow, and red, all bright colours, and it is a pleasing sight to see a flock of them suddenly wheel in the atmosphere, and light upon a tree; their gaudy colours are reflected in the sun with a brilliance of the rainbow: they are a noisy bird, but their notes are disagreeable. This bird is first met with on descending the Ohio about the *falls*, after which they become plenty, are constantly to be seen on the Kentucky or Indiana shore, and add to the delight a traveller feels on descending that beautiful river." In a Journal of a Voyage up the Mississippi River from the mouth of the Ohio to St. Louis, on July 16, he says, "We frequently meet the *paroquet* on the banks of the river, and have passed several flocks today. This is a kind of parrot, a beautiful bird, which is very common in Louisiana, Missouri, and Kentucky." In the Expedition to the Rockies under Major Stephen Long, they (May 27, 1819)<sup>3</sup> "among other birds...noticed about Shawanetown (Ill. on Ohio river), numerous flocks of *psittacus carolinensis*, . . .;" in another place (Engineer Cantonment) it is given in the list of birds; "near Louisville, May 25," "*Psittacus Carolinensis* . . . seen several times during the winter"; at the Falls of the Canadian river near the mouth of the Great North Fork, Indian Territory, "The paroquet (with others) . . . filled the woods with life and music"; and finally, Aug. 24 and 25, 1820, between the Canadian and Verdi-

<sup>1</sup> Warden, D. B. The Statistical, Political and Historical Account of the United States of North America; etc. 3 vols. 1819, Vol. II, p. 351, Vol. III, pp. 55, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Schoolcraft, H. R. A View of the Lead Mines of Missouri. New York, 1819, pp. 37, 232.

<sup>3</sup> James, Edwin. Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains Performed in the Years 1819 and '20, etc. under the command of Major Stephen H. Long. 2 vols. Phila. 1823. Vol. I, pp. 32, 373, 377. Vol. II, pp. 159, 226.

gris rivers, Indian Territory, they notice them. On the first day they say, "A flock of paroquets flew over our heads, uttering their loud note, with their usual loquacity." On the second, they record, "Another flock of paroquets were seen to-day."

In the next decade, we begin with H. R. Schoolcraft, the friend of the Indian, who holds at the time of his writing (1821) that <sup>1</sup> "The paroquet is found as far north as the mouth of the Illinois, and flocks have occasionally been seen as high as Chicago." In 1821, this same author again speaks of this form.<sup>2</sup> "We first saw the perroquet about Terra Haute; and this bird is thence frequently seen to enliven the landscape. In the course of the day, we caught one of these showy birds, which had been pounced upon by a hawk. The flock, from which it was struck, happened, at that moment, to be passing over us; and it fell into the water quite near. The wound it had received was very slight, and it soon recovered; and by its cries attracted great numbers of its kind to follow." The year succeeding, J. Woods merely notes, that in Illinois,<sup>3</sup> "Paroquets are the same as are seen in sages in England,—a mischievous bird." In 1822-23, William H. Blane at the same place where David Thomas observed them (French Lick, Ind.) says,<sup>4</sup> "When crossing a small stream, the day after leaving Byrom's I saw a large flock of beautiful green and yellow parroquets. These are the first I had met with; and as they were very tame, and allowed me to come close to them, I got off my horse, and stopped a short time to admire them. I afterwards saw numbers of the same kind in the flats of the Wabash and Mississippi, for this beautiful bird apparently delights in the neighbourhood of streams."

When on the Alabama river below Cahawba, Jan. 6, 1826, Bernhard, Duke of Saxe Weimar encounters,<sup>5</sup> "several paroquets flying round, who kept up a great screaming. Many were shot.

<sup>1</sup> Schoolcraft, H. R. *Narrative Journal of Travles from Detroit Northwest, etc. in the year 1820.* Albany, 1821, pp. 259, 260.

<sup>2</sup> Schoolcraft, H. R. *Travels in the Central Portions of the Mississippi Valley.* N. Y. 1825, p. 151.

<sup>3</sup> Woods, J. *Two Years Residence in the Settlements on the English Prairie in the Illinois Country, United States, etc.* London, 1822, p. 198.

<sup>4</sup> Blane, William H. *An Excursion through the United States and Canada during the Years 1822-23 by an English Gentleman.* London, 1824, p. 144.

<sup>5</sup> Bernhard, Duke of Saxe-Weimar Eisenach. *Travels through North America, during the years 1825 and 1826.* Phila., Pa., Vol. II, pp. 35, 38, 99.

They are parrots, but of a larger species than the common kind, clear green with yellow tips to their wings, and orange-coloured heads, flesh-coloured bills, and long green tails." Two days later, on the same river near Claiborne, he "saw . . . , on the shores also, numbers of paroquets which make a great noise." Finally, Apr. 8, 1826, when at St. Charles, Missouri, he observes, "In the forest, however, there were . . . several paroquets, similar to those I had seen on the river Alabama." In 1826, Timothy Flint's *Recollections* appear. At Cincinnati he finds that a<sup>1</sup> "Flock of paroquet are glittering among the trees, . . ." Along the Kentucky river "There were also great numbers of paroquets . . ."; and of Shawoetown, he says, "My children contemplated with unsated curiosity the flocks of paroquets fluttering among the trees, when we came near the shore." The same author, two years later, observes that in Missouri,<sup>2</sup> "The beautiful paroquet frequents the sycamore bottoms, and poorly compensates by the extreme beauty of its plumage for the injury it does the orchard and garden fruits." In the Ohio river region, 1828, Judge James Hall finds,<sup>3</sup> "Here too, large flocks of paroquets are heard chattering in the woods, or seen sporting their bright green plumage in the sun-beams."

In 1832 we have a summary of the northward range of the Carolina paroquet at that time. Hinton says, (excerpts from Wilson's account)<sup>4</sup> "Of the 168 kinds of parrots enumerated by European writers as inhabiting the various regions of the globe, the Carolina parrot is the only species found native within the territory of the United States. This bird inhabits the interior of Louisiana, and the shores of the Mississippi and Ohio, and their tributary waters, even beyond the Illinois river, to the neighbourhood of Lake Michigan in lat. 42 degrees north; and, contrary to the generally received opinion, is chiefly resident in all these places. Eastward of the Apalachian, it is seldom seen farther north than the state of Maryland, though straggling parties have

---

<sup>1</sup> Flint, Timothy. *Recollections of the Last Ten Years Passed in Occasional Residences and Journeyings in the Valley of the Mississippi, etc.* Boston, 1826, pp. 52, 53, 84, 248.

<sup>2</sup> Flint, Timothy. *A Condensed Geography and History of the Western States or The Mississippi Valley.* Cincinnati, 1828. Vol. II, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> Hall, James. *Letters from the West; etc.* London, 1828, p. 190.

<sup>4</sup> Hinton, J. H. *The History and Topography of the United States.* London, 1832, 2 vol. Vol. II, p. 155.

been occasionally observed among the valleys of the Juniata, and according to some, even twenty miles north-west of Albany, in the state of New York."

For some time after 1781 various authors continued to suppose <sup>1</sup> "that in this (Mississippi) valley the temperature is higher than in the same parallels in the Atlantic country.... Mr. Jefferson asserts, that... paroquets, are seen farther north on the Ohio and Mississippi, than on the Atlantic shore. If it be so, the inference, drawn from these facts, might easily be shown to be erroneous, by showing, that their locality along these streams is fixed by other circumstances, than temperature.... The immense numbers of paroquets, that are seen on the lower courses of the Mississippi, will naturally push their colonies far to the north on that river, where they still find all circumstances, but temperature, the same; where there are old, large and hollow sycamore trees, the favorite haunts of this brilliant bird, furnishing it at once food, shelter, and a home." In another place, Flint speaks at equal length of the <sup>2</sup> "Parroquet, psittacus Caroliniensis. These are birds of the parrot class, seen from latitude 40° to the gulf of Mexico. Their food is the fruit of the sycamore, and their retreat in the hollow of that tree. They are a very voracious bird, preying on apples, grapes, and figs, and all kinds of fruit. They fly in large flocks, and are seen in greatest numbers before a storm, or a great change in the weather. They have hooked, ivory bills, a splendid mixture of burnished gilding and green on the heads, and their bodies are a soft and yet brilliant green. Their cry, as they are flying, is shrill and discordant. They are said to perch, by hanging by their bill to a branch. When they are taken, they make battle, and their hooked bill pounces into the flesh of their enemy. They are annoying to fruit orchards, and in this respect a great scourge to the farmer. We have seen no bird of the size, with plumage so brilliant. They impart a singular magnificence to the forest prospect, as they are seen darting through the foliage, and among the white branches of the sycamore." And, finally, in Florida, whose ornithology "is probably the richest in North

<sup>1</sup> Flint, Timothy. *The History and Geography of the Mississippi Valley.* 2nd edit., 2 vols. Cincinnati, 1832. Vol. I, pp. 32, 187, 292, 71, 72.

<sup>2</sup> Flint, Timothy. *ibid.*, 2 vols in one. Cincinnati, 1832, Vol. I, pp. 71, 72, 200.



America . . . ,” he finds that “In the woods and stationary through the winter are . . . paroquets, . . . .”

In his “Travels in the Interior of North America,” Maximilian, Prince of Wied, finds in 1833 at Fort Clarke on Missouri (old Lewis and Clarke fort) <sup>1</sup> “There are, likewise many interesting species of birds, among which are . . . , the Carolina parrot, . . . .” At New Harmony on Wabash (winter 1832-33), he notes “(Psittacus Carolinensis) which remain here during the winter. No other kind of parrot seems to bear so great a degree of cold as this. We often saw them flying about in the forests, feeding on the fruit of the plane, when Reaumur’s thermometer was at 11° below zero. In the mild climate of the Ohio and Wabash they remain all the year through. They are amusing birds in a cage, and become very tame.” When northwest of Harmony at Long Pond, “near a field of maize, in the forest,” he writes, “I saw a flock of parrots, of which we often shot many with great ease. They were not shy, and soon re-assembled after our shot had dispersed them. Their manner and note resembled those of the long-tailed paroquet of Brazil. With a shrill cry they flew rapidly from tree to tree, when their beautiful bright green colour was seen to great advantage. Mr. Bodmer has given a very faithful representation of one of these flocks (vide Plate 38, Vol. XXV). They eat the fruit of the planes; and if we did not disturb them, they sat in a row, close together to warm themselves in the faint beams of the January sun. Finally just beyond Weeping-water River (Neb.) he “saw some parrots, which Gardner had already observed,” on the same river.

On a trip on the Mississippi river, Arfwedson twice records them. Above Rodney, Miss., he <sup>2</sup> “landed, with a few fellow-travellers, at one of the firewood stations, with an intention of killing some of the small green parrots, which were flying in thousands about in the wood.” Again, just below the mouth of the Arkansas river, “our sportsmen came running in every direction from the wood, carrying on their shoulders a variety of birds, among which parrots were

---

<sup>1</sup> Early Western Travels. Edited by R. G. Thwaites. Vols. XXIII, p. 250. Vol. XXII, p. 168, 169, 194, 195. Vol. XXIV, p. 466.

<sup>2</sup> Arfwedson, C. D. The United States and Canada, in 1832, 1833, and 1843. 2 vols. 1834. Vol. II, pp. 96, 101.

the most conspicuous, on account of the beauty of their plumes." About the same time, Shirreff at Springfield, Ill., finds,<sup>1</sup> "The forests abounded with green coloured paroquets, which fluttered about with a disagreeable noise, in flocks of six or seven." In a "Narrative of a Journey across Rocky Mountains to Columbia River," John K. Townsend at Boonville, Mo., April 8, 1834, says,<sup>2</sup> "We saw here vast numbers of the beautiful parrot of this country (the *Psittacus carolinensis*). They flew around us in flocks, keeping a constant and loud screaming, as though they would chide us for invading their territory; and the splendid green and red of their plumage glancing in the sunshine, as they whirled and circled within a few feet of us, had a most magnificent appearance. They seem entirely unsuspecting of danger, and after being fired at, only huddle closer together, as if to obtain protection from each other, and as their companions are falling around them, they curve down their necks, and look at them fluttering upon the ground, as though perfectly at a loss to account for so unusual an occurrence. It is a most inglorious sort of shooting; down right, cold-blooded murder." At Independence, Mo., he finds, "Parroquets are plentiful in the bottom lands, . . ."

Near Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Murray writes,<sup>3</sup> "I rambled about the woods near our halting-place, with my fowling-piece in my hand, . . . , but found nothing feathered upon which to exercise my skill except a small flock of green Perroquets (I believe, the species called *Psittacus rufirostris*.) I killed half a dozen, and we cooked them for supper; they were fat, and by no means unpalatable. I retained some of the more gay and brilliant feathers as presents for the Indians." At Hennepin, Ill., 1835, Hoffmann<sup>4</sup> sat down upon a fallen tree among the tangled vines of the rich bottom opposite to Hennepin, and watched a flock of green paroquets fluttering among the wych-elms which here and there skirted the shore, . . . " In Texas, Edward records<sup>5</sup> "a few flocks of the

<sup>1</sup> Shirreff, Patrick. *A Tour through North America; etc.* Edinburgh, 1835, p. 246.

<sup>2</sup> Townsend, John K., Phila., Pa., 1839, pp. 20, 21, 24.

<sup>3</sup> Murray, Hon. C. A. *Travels in North America during the Years 1834, 1835 and 1836.* 2 vols. N. Y. 1839. Vol. I, p. 184.

<sup>4</sup> Hoffmann, C. F. *A Winter in the West by a New Yorker.* 2 vols., N. Y., 1835. Vol. I, p. 282.

<sup>5</sup> Edward, D. B. *The History of Texas; etc.* Cincinnati, 1836, p. 75.

green paroquet whose scream is anything but pleasant." The following year, Williams mentions the<sup>1</sup> "Paroquet *Psittacus carolinensis*" as of Florida; while in Missouri, Wetmore thinks,<sup>2</sup> "The paroquet found in Missouri deserves notice, as peculiar in character and attractive in plumage. This is a bird strangely resembling the green parrot in colour and form; and it is reported of them, that at night they repose within the cavity of a hollow tree, hanging by their curved Roman-nose-beaks. This report may require confirmation." The last notes of the decade are from the pen of Judge Hall, who says,<sup>3</sup> "The paroquet is now seldom seen north of Cincinnati. They are abundant below Louisville, where flocks of them are heard chattering in the woods, or beheld sporting their green plumage in the sunbeams." In enumerating several forms of the western country, as an afterthought, he concludes "with the addition of the paroquet, a bird of beautiful plumage, but very bad character, whose thievish propensities renders him a great nuisance to orchards and cornfields."

In the next decade, Kennedy in a list of the birds of Texas, mentions<sup>4</sup> "the gay, clamorous, and pilfering paroquet, . . ." In "Notes on the Northwest, etc." Bradford in 1846, finds<sup>5</sup> "a small paroquet. . . (is) met occasionally." In the "Fauna and Flora of Georgia," George White 1849 speaks of<sup>6</sup> "*Centurus Carolinensis*. It is a remarkable fact that our paroquets are very rapidly diminishing in number. Along our maritime districts where 15 or 20 years ago they were plentiful, scarcely any are now to be found; and it is probable that in a short time they will entirely disappear from our State."

In 1851, Schoolcraft in his "Personal Memoirs," when between Louisville and Shippensport, writes,<sup>7</sup> "It was about this point, or a little above, that we first noticed the gay and noisy paroquet,

---

<sup>1</sup> Williams, J. L. *The Territory of Florida, etc.* New York, 1837, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Wetmore, A. *Gazetteer of the State of Missouri.* St. Louis, Mo., 1837. pp. 30, 31.

<sup>3</sup> Hall, Jas. *Notes on the Western States: Phila.* 1838, p. 124.

<sup>4</sup> Kennedy, Wm. *Texas: etc.* 2nd edit. London, 1841, p. 130.

<sup>5</sup> Bradford, Wm. J. A. *Notes on the Northwest or Valley of the Upper Mississippi.* New York and London, 1846, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> White, George. *Statistics of the State of Georgia.* Savannah, 1849, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Schoolcraft, H. R. *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes of the American Frontiers: etc.* Phila., Pa., 1851, p. 26.

flocks of which inhabited the forests." Our last note comes Feb. 19-24, 1855, when Hon. A. M. Murray<sup>1</sup> "saw" at Palatka?, Fla., "several little green paroquets with yellow heads, the only kind of parrot common to Florida," — the only region where it was definitely known to exist 40 years later (1895).

In 1892, A. W. Butler in his valuable "Notes on the Range and Habits of the Carolina Parrakeet"<sup>2</sup> summarizes the stages of its gradual restriction of range as follows: "From the evidence here presented it seems that they had disappeared almost wholly from Ohio and from Indiana, save the southwestern portion, by some time between 1835 and 1840, and that they left Indiana about 1858. So far as I know, there is but one record of the recurrence of the species in the region thus vacated. The late Dr. J. M. Wheaton gives, upon what he considers good authority, an account of a flock of twenty-five or thirty individuals at Columbus, Ohio, in July, 1862. Within about thirty years from the time first referred to by Audubon the species had entirely disappeared from a territory south of a line drawn, from Chicago, Ill., to Albany, N. Y., to, approximately, a line drawn from some point in Virginia, or perhaps North Carolina, to the lower Wabash Valley. In the next forty-five years they disappeared from southwestern Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, Kentucky, most of Missouri, and from the immediate vicinity of the Mississippi River, also from the States of the Atlantic coast as far south as Florida. The steady contraction of occupied area still continues. They are now perhaps found in but a few restricted localities. In the southern part of Florida they are still to be found in some numbers. Perhaps a small area in the interior of some of the Gulf States may still be occupied by them. Besides there is an area, whose limits are undefined, in Indian Territory, extending probably into Texas and possibly into Arkansas and Missouri, where Parrakeets are said to be found still. It is but natural to think that the extinction of these birds is but a question of a few years." In conclusion, he says, "All facts concerning their former distribution and their habits as noted when they ranged north of the Ohio River, are

---

<sup>1</sup> Murray, A. M. Letters from the United States, Cuba, and Canada. 2 vols. in one. N. Y., 1856, p. 228.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Auk', IX, Jan., 1892, pp. 49-56.

very much desired." We trust the present recital of records (not usually encountered in the normal course of ornithologic investigations) will be only one of many answers to this earnest appeal, an incentive to greater search both for other records and for living representatives, and a worthy supplement of the interesting articles already published.

---

NOTES ON PALMER'S THRASHER (*TOXOSTOMA  
CURVIROSTRE PALMERI*).

BY EARLE F. STAFFORD.

AMONG the most noticeable and interesting birds about the ranch I had taken in Tucson, Arizona, were a pair of Palmer's Thrashers. The ranch was situated on the border of the creosote and cactus-grown desert, of which this species is characteristic; and while the birds were abundantly scattered among the cholla cactus portions of the desert, especially about the ranches, each of which appeared to have its two, these notes are based, in their details, wholly upon the observation of my own pair.

The Palmer's Thrasher resembles the eastern Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*) in carriage, flight and general traits of behavior, having the same nervous vivacity; flying low and rapidly, and running with extraordinary speed on the ground, where most of its food is obtained. I have seen my birds spend much time in the yard half squatting, with braced feet, digging holes of considerable depth (some as deep as two and a half inches) with quick, powerful blows of their sickle-like beaks; or casting aside the mould and parched soil with nervous sidewise thrusts, in search of grubs. On those parts of the desert, too, affected by the birds the ground usually shows plentiful signs of their probing.

The song of this species suggests that of the eastern Thrasher, but lacks its variety and separation into distinct phrases, and is more in the nature of a loud, interrupted carol, clear, and melodious.