

Concerning the Hawaiian Linnet.— In 'The Auk' for July, 1912, pages 336-338, Mr. John C. Phillips makes a contribution to the discussion of the interesting case of the Linnet of the Hawaiian Islands, where an apparent change in color has come about since the introduction of the bird forty of more years ago. The above writer's remarks were evidently stimulated by two things: He did not approve of the name *mutans*, this having been proposed by me in order to give the supposedly new form systematic standing; and his doubts were clearly strong as to the Hawaiian Linnet possessing any really distinctive character.

In the first place, I was chagrined that anyone after reading my former paper should interpret my use of the name *mutans* as signifying my belief that the Hawaiian Linnet owed its character to the definite process of late commonly called mutation. I see now that such an inference ought to have been anticipated, and I have a due feeling of humiliation. The word *mutans* was selected because it was the Latin equivalent of the present participle "changing," referring of course to the apparent existence in this case of a species *in process of change*,— not by any means through de Vriesian mutation, but by some other process, possibly one among those discussed in my previous paper.

In the second place, as to the value of the color-character which the Hawaiian Linnet displays, rather irregularly it is admitted, various considerations are mentioned by Mr. Phillips. One thing, however, certainly supports the notion that degree of redness (counting lemon yellow, cadmium yellow, orange, orange vermilion, poppy red, crimson, and various dilutions of these) may be a real racial or specific character, therefore of an intrinsic or germinal nature. This is, that over and over again in the best systematic writings on birds we find fine differences within this series of pigment colors recognized as perfectly good characters. The following genera among our North American Fringillidæ afford examples: *Acanthis*, *Pinicola*, *Carpodacus* (otherwise than in the disputed case), and *Loxia*. If such a character, whether or not in company with differences in size, etc., is of systematic value in any of these cases, why not in that of the Hawaiian Linnet?

The paramount interest in the problem under discussion, rests on the apparent fact that we have here a character *originating*, possibly becoming intrinsic; in other words, a species in process of change. Further collections of linnets from the Hawaiian Islands are immensely to be desired; and as Mr. Phillips suggests, someone must work with live birds under various conditions, so as to bring light from experimental sources.— J. GRINNELL, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoölogy, Berkeley, California.*

The Acadian Sharp-tailed Sparrow and Other Birds at Plymouth, Mass.— The winter had been quite severe and on February 2, 1912, the harbor was nearly frozen over, only the channels, some distance off shore, being open. The shore was covered with snow and broken ice. Gulls and ducks were numerous around the open water in mid-harbor.