

*erythropus*, *Hirundo fissipes*, *Fringilla erythrophthalma*, *Parus atricapillus*, etc., showing that he rightly considered these specific names to be adjectives.

From *erythros* and *melas* comes the adjective *erythromelas*, fem. *erythromelaena*, neut. *erythromelan*, red and black. Now if *Piranga* is considered feminine, as it is (*Piranga rubra*), the Scarlet Tanager's name is *Piranga erythromelaena*. There is no escape from this except for those who refuse to make an adjectival specific name conform in gender to the generic name with which it is associated.<sup>1</sup>—WALTER FAXON, *Lexington, Mass.*

**Constant Difference in Relative Proportions of Parts as a Specific Character.**—In the oft-recurring discussions of what constitutes a species and the difference between subspecies and species, one interesting kind of intergradation which might be termed "pseudo-intergradation" had not been mentioned.

This is well illustrated by certain of the Guadalupe Island forms, notably the Rock Wren (*Salpinctes*) which has at times been regarded as a species and again as a subspecies even by the same authority.

The Guadalupe bird, together with its near ally of San Martin Island, differs from its relatives of other islands and the mainland in its longer bill, relatively shorter wing and darker coloration. The difference in proportions is constant so far as known; only exceptionally short-billed specimens agree in the length of this member with the longest billed individuals of other forms, while only very long-winged examples fail to differ from short-winged birds of the related races. This, however, has been held to be intergradation and on these grounds the Guadalupe bird, *S. guadeloupeensis*, was degraded to subspecific rank by Ridgway in 1904, even before the somewhat intermediate race *S. g. proximus* was discovered.

Individuals agreeing in the length of the bill, however, naturally exhibit the maximum difference in the length of the wing, while those agreeing in the wing can be distinguished by the length of the bill. In other words the ratio of bill to wing length in the two species *S. obsoletus* and *S. guadeloupeensis* is constantly different and furnishes a diagnostic character by which the species may always be distinguished. In the former the wing is more than three and a half times the length of the bill, in the latter less than three and a half. In addition there is a well-marked difference in color.

It seems reasonable to consider such differentiation in proportions when developed to the point where there is constant difference in ratio as of specific value. Measurements appear to indicate that this point has been reached in the Rock Wrens, and that the dark, long-billed forms should therefore be regarded as specifically distinct from the paler, shorter billed races. The same conclusion was arrived at by Swarth in 1914 (*Condor*, XVI, p. 216).

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting in this connection to note that Ridgway (*Bird N. and Mid. Amer.*, II, p. 101) rejects *P. erythromelaena* Salv. 1868 because of *P. erythromelas* Vieill. 1819 but does not alter the latter! — Ed.

The Guadalupe Junco (*Junco insularis*) easily fulfills the above requirements of a species. Indeed as it averages 10 mm. less in length of wing than its nearest relative *J. townsendi*, and its bill is nearly 2 mm. longer, there is small likelihood even of ordinary intergradation. There are also well-defined color characters.

In Dr. Dwight's recent paper on the Juncos (Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., XXXVIII, 1918, p. 269) he has reduced this Junco as well as *Junco townsendi* to subspecies, on the grounds that their characters are *quantitative* rather than *qualitative*. But are their peculiarities merely *quantitative*, and do not the differences exhibited by these forms more nearly approach the characters commonly regarded as of generic value than do the "*qualitative*" color differences between the forms regarded by Dr. Dwight as species?—W. DEW. MILLER, *American Museum of Natural History, New York City.*

**"Off" Flavors of Wildfowl.**—Following is an extract from a letter on this subject by Dr. L. C. Jones of Falmouth, Mass., who has been quoted in a previous article<sup>1</sup> on this subject. It will be noted that one of Dr. Jones' theories is much the same as that advanced by the writer in the last sentence of his first communication on fishy flavor.<sup>2</sup>

"I would like to advance a new theory which I think may explain the cause in many cases. I refer to the possibility of "fatigue toxins" in the flesh of birds which have taken long flights and are thin or emaciated and obviously out of condition. The same might hold in those birds which have been shot previously but not wholly disabled. Many of these have intestines agglutinated with peritonitis, local abscesses, or suppurating wounds in the skin or muscles where shot has entered. Unpleasant as it may be to think of this, practically all of these birds reach the market and are undoubtedly eaten, chiefly of course by those who do not dress their own game.

"The more you consider this explanation, the more points you will find to support it. For instance, I have eaten many ducks in the beginning of the season, Redheads, Bluebills and Black Ducks, birds which have just arrived from the north and I think without question that most of them have been comparatively unpalatable. Birds from the same flocks, shot a fortnight or so later, even when the diet has consisted almost entirely of eelgrass seed from the salt water bays and estuaries, have been plump and delicious. May not fatigue with starvation, or rest with repletion, be the great determining factors in the flavor of migrating fowl? You may readily conceive that in certain instances of excessive fatigue or when the abdominal organs were badly infected, the flesh of such birds might be distinctly poisonous. . . ." L. C. Jones, M. D.—W. L. McATEE, *U. S. Biological Survey, Washington, D. C.*

<sup>1</sup> Auk, Vol. 36, No. 1, Jan., 1919, pp. 101-101.

<sup>2</sup> Auk, Vol. 35, No. 4, Oct., 1918, p. 476.