

The only published record for the Dickcissel in Rhode Island is a bird shot by Lt. Wirt Robinson at Newport in 1888. This record is in Howe and Sturtevant's 'Birds of Rhode Island.' Unpublished accounts of the bird's occurrence in the state include a sight record by Dr. Herbert E. Walter, president of Rhode Island Audubon Society. He found a singing male on Neutaconkanut Hill on the outskirts of Providence "about ten years ago." He was familiar with the bird in the middle west prior to that time.

Our bird was first noticed by Mrs. Frederic H. Pember feeding with English Sparrows, December 18. Its tail was missing. With this mark and its yellow breast it was easily distinguished. It was taken in the government bird banders' sparrow trap December 20. The trap was placed on the ground and baited with the Audubon mixture of small seeds. The bird's gait was a little different from that of the Sparrow. This may have been caused in part by the absence of the tail feathers. Seeds were eaten in a slightly different manner also. During the first part of its confinement it was very restless but soon became accustomed to the large cage and appeared to be very comfortable when taken to Boston for a stay of four days. After its return to Pawtuxet it was released. It remained about the premises throughout the day feeding with other birds, walking about the porch, or seeking shelter beneath it. On the following day a heavy snowstorm came. The Dickcissel has not been seen since. It wears band number 28623.—HENRY E. CHILDS, 864 Broadway, East Providence, R. I.

Pseudospermestes not a Valid Genus.—In the classification of the Weaver-birds which I proposed in 1917,¹ *Pseudospermestes* was included on faith, and its systematic position was left in doubt, for although it was said to include two species, no figure had been published of them, and no specimen was contained in any museum of America or of England. The type of the genus was *P. goosensi* Dubois² from Kisantu, western Belgian Congo, of which the Berlin Museum was said to have a second example from Ossidinge, Cameroon.³ The other species assigned to the genus was *Pseudospermestes microrhyncha* Reichenow⁴ from Buddu on the west shore of Lake Victoria.

During the autumn of 1921 I had the opportunity of examining both types, but found that neither of them represented valid species. The type of *goosensi* is simply a young *Spermestes poensis* in the brown juvenal plumage. It is not a skin, but a dried mummy, with the tail not yet fully grown, and the remiges, too, with slight sheaths at their bases. At this stage the young of *poensis* is readily distinguishable from that of *cucullatus* by its much darker upper parts, though both of them differ

¹ Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist., XXXVII, 1917, p. 261.

² Ann. Mus. Congo, Zool., Ser. IV, Vol. I, fasc. 1, 1905, p. 16.

³ Reichenow, Mitteilungen Zool. Mus. Berlin, V, 1911, p. 253.

⁴ Orn. Mtsber., XXIV, 1916, p. 168.

widely from adults in coloration. The Berlin specimen of "*goosensi*" belongs to the same species, *poensis*, and is equally young, for all its wing and tail quills were still growing. Any peculiarities in the bills of these two specimens are attributable to the shrinking of the soft mandibles of fledglings.

In like manner, *Pseudospermestes microrhyncha* is based upon a type which is obviously in juvenal plumage, with wings and tail still showing sheaths at the bases of their quills. Its nondescript plumage is that which the young of *Vidua macroura* (= *serena*) wear when they have just emerged from the nest of their foster parents—for the species is known to be parasitic. To make sure, I compared it with another young Pintailed Whydah in the Berlin Museum. The bill of the type seemed unusually small and blackish, but the characteristic swellings on the skin of the gape were still noticeable.

I hold, therefore, that the genus *Pseudospermestes* has been erroneously established to include young stages of two species of Estrildinae already well known, and that it has no real existence in nature.—JAMES P. CHAPIN, *American Museum of Natural History*.

The Tree Swallow (*Iridoprocne bicolor*) Affected by Sudden Cold.

—Many instances have been reported of our insectivorous birds being seriously affected by severe and sudden falling of temperature, and thousands being benumbed beyond recovery in a very short period. In the 'Forest and Stream' of Dec. 6, 1888, I recorded an instance where the temperature, as late as May 11, dropped to 35° and 645 specimens of 22 species, mostly Warblers, were picked up dead. This was largely in the vicinity of Racine, Wis. This was, of course, a very small portion of the actual fatalities. I have seen hundreds of Tree Swallows that had collected on the bare limbs of dead trees bordering the Kankakee River at English Lake, Ind., so benumbed by an exceedingly cold night in early spring, that they were unable to take flight when I struck the limbs sharply with my paddle.

In looking over some correspondence from my late friend Edward Read of Cambridge, Mass., I find an interesting example of this Swallow being affected by sudden cold. In this letter he writes that while on a fishing trip at their camp on Grand Lake, Washington Co., Maine, the latter part of May 1906, they had an unusual cold spell and the temperature dropped as low as 30°. The next day they picked up a number of dead Tree Swallows on the beach and in the paths about camp.

One of the buildings was used for the cook house and the second story window was screened with wire. The heat of the building passing out through this open window was detected by the Swallows and late in the afternoon they noticed the screen covered solid with them, huddled together like a swarming of bees. One of the guides took a dip net and scooping it full took them into the house where they were kept warm until the following morning and then liberated.