

and on even during the days of the storm,—and then disappeared for more than a week, finally coming back to complete the nest.—LEWIS O. SHELLEY, *East Westmoreland, N. H.*

An Ancient Bird Skin.—When I was in Salt Lake City in 1895, some men came from southern Utah bringing a large collection of cliff dweller relics. Among these was a skin of the Mountain Bluebird. The bird had been skinned through an incision along the line of the breast bone, as we do it now, but the bones of the upper legs and wings and the skull had been removed. The skin was pliable and free from grease and was perfectly preserved in the dry dust where it had lain hidden.

Pueblo Indians, like more southern tribes, used feathers extensively for adornment, weaving strips of the skin, with feathers attached, into the fabrics of articles of attire. It seems perfectly logical that they would capture birds at the most favorable season and preserve the skins for future use.—C. E. H. AIKEN, *Colorado Springs, Colo.*

An Unpublished Letter of John K. Townsend.—In indexing the extensive historic correspondence of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, I found among other interesting letters one from John K. Townsend, written from Independence, Missouri, on the threshold of his expedition to the Pacific Coast with Thomas Nuttall. It was addressed to Dr. Thomas McEuen, at that time (1834) Recording Secretary of the Academy.

As the letter contains some information on the abundance of Prairie Chickens and Sandhill Cranes at that rather remote period, Dr. Witmer Stone suggested that readers of 'The Auk' would find it of interest and value. The Dr. Morton referred to in the letter was Dr. Samuel G. Morton, the anthropologist, later President of the Academy.

Independence, Mo.

Ap 23rd 1834.

Dear Dr.

My family will send you a few birds that I shot on my way to this place. I am sorry there are not more of them but my mode of travelling from St. Louis to this place (on foot) prevented my carrying a number of rare ones that I shot. I found the Prairie Hens immensely numerous some miles below & could easily have prepared some but I expected to find them as abundant here & concluded not to encumber myself with them;—I have been very much disappointed therefore in not being able to find one in the neighborhood. They are said to inhabit the prairies about 8 miles above, but since our arrival here I have been so constantly engaged in preparing for the journey that I have not had time to look after them.

I have seen a number of Sandhill Cranes but always flying high—they are said to alight at night in heavy marshes in the neighborhood of streams, but are seldom seen resting during the day. I have offered a reward for the capture of one, but none have yet been brought me.

The small Finch which I send is new to me. It is, I believe a true *Emberiza*, perhaps allied to the *lapponica*.¹ Inhabits the prairies in large flocks is very shy & sings when rising like the *Anthus*—The specimen is a very indifferent one but I shall no doubt be able to find others. The larger Finch I am also unacquainted with, but think it possible it may be the *F. leucophrys* in imperfect plumage,²—Should it prove to be new however, you may, if you think proper, read the inclosed description before the Academy.

The Small Woodpecker may or may not be the *P. varius*, it resembles it in general appearance but I think the plumage differs widely from it, the tongue of this bird is *rounded* at the end & *fimbriated*, whereas that of *P. varius* is, if I recollect, *sagittate*. The few birds that may remain after selecting what may be wanted for the Acad. I should be obliged if you would return to my father who has been directed as to the disposition of them—those that I shall send in future you will please retain for me, or dispose of them, when it can be done advantageously.

If Dr. Morton shall have returned please remember me particularly to him.

Mr. Nuttall sends his Complts.

Very truly yours

J. K. Townsend

I open my note to make a remark upon another Finch that I have just killed. I am not acquainted with it—May it not be one of the dubious species of Pennant. It is marked No. 8.³

J. K. T.

—JAMES A. G. REHN, *Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia*.

¹ This is probably the Chestnut-collared Longspur, which was described in 1837 by Townsend (*Journ. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila.*, vii, p. 189) as *Plectrophanes ornata*. The description states it "inhabits the prairies of the Platte River." Dr. Stone and I have been unable to trace the specimen referred to in the letter.

² This may be Harris's Sparrow, which Nuttall in 1840 described as *Fringilla querula* (*Manual Ornith.*, second edition, *Land Birds*, p. 555), from several localities, one of which was "a few miles to the west of Independence, Missouri." We cannot trace the specimen mentioned, and the description referred to was not formally presented to the Academy.

³ This specimen cannot be traced in the Academy collection.