

## GENERAL NOTES.

**Townsend's Sooty Albatross.**—In substantiation of my claim that Townsend really secured his specimen of the Sooty Albatross (*Diomedea fusca* Audubon) off the mouth of the Columbia River (cf. Auk, XLVIII, pp. 106-109) I submit the following extract from an article by Townsend published in the 'Literary Record and Journal of the Linnaean Association of Pennsylvania College' [Gettysburg], III, 1847, pp. 88-92. "On the 12th day of Dec., 1834, I set sail in the good ship 'May Dacre' of Boston, from the mouth of the Columbia river, bound for the Sandwich islands.—Off Cape Disappointment and for several hundred miles out to sea, we observed great numbers of sea birds of various kinds, several of which I myself described and published as new species. The little Guillemots (*Uria*) were tumbling and rolling along the surface half swimming, half flying, and looking almost precisely like large eggs as they sported across our bow. From this resemblance, they have universally among sailors obtained the name of 'Egg Birds.' Large Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax*) of several species, were very abundant, as were also various kinds of Petrels (*Procellaria*) and Mother Carey's Chickens (*Thalassidroma*).

"A large brown Albatross (which I named *Diomedea fusca*) inhabits these seas. It differs considerably from the common white species which is so abundant around the two great capes. Though smaller than the Cape Bird, it yet measures from twelve to fourteen feet across the wings. No one who has not seen this noble bird in flight can form any idea of the extreme ease and grace with which it skims over the foaming billow. Its long, falcate wing seems never to tire.—Sometimes it seeks the higher regions of the atmosphere, sailing, without any apparent motion of its pinion, and performing the most sublime aerial evolutions. Again it descends to the surface and floats over the dashing and sparkling waves; now lost to sight in the deepest trough of the sea, and instantly reappearing on the crest of the next billow.—On, on, he flies over the wild and wasteful ocean, without ever appearing to rest, except when he alights to pick up something from its surface."

In this connection it is interesting to note the treatment of Trudeau's Tern in the A. O. U. 'Check-List.' Here is another species of which the type is extant, taken nearly a century ago and with no subsequent record from North America and yet it is accorded full status while the Townsend bird is relegated to the Hypothetical List.—FRANK L. BURNS, *Berwyn, Pa.*

[With due regard for Mr. Burns' interesting and apparently hitherto overlooked quotation and with no intention whatever of detracting from Townsend's credit, since I consider Audubon the one at fault, I am not convinced that this antarctic species could have come from the North Pacific. In the list of the birds of Oregon, in the Appendix to his 'Narrative,' Townsend mentions but one brown Albatross '*Diomedea fusca*' but in his subsequent list (Jour. Acad. Nat. Sci. Phila., 1839) prepared after the

appearance of Audubon's fifth volume, he adds *D. nigripes*, apparently not realizing, until the appearance of Audubon's description, that he had obtained two species of these birds. As Townsend himself never described *D. fusca* and had not seen Audubon's description of it at the time he published his first list, I feel certain that the bird to which he referred was in reality *D. nigripes*, a common bird off the coast of Oregon. Audubon, too, probably did not distinguish between the two until after he had described *D. fusca*. It is curious, too, that Townsend compared his "*D. fusca*" in Mr. Burns' quotation with the white Wandering Albatross and does not mention *D. nigripes*. To illustrate the apparent difficulty under which Townsend labored in trying to remember details of the capture of certain birds, after he had disposed of his specimens we find that in his first list he very properly made no mention of *Fringilla mortoni*, an undoubted Chilean bird, but after Audubon had named and described it as from the Columbia River, Townsend entered it in his second list just as he did the other "Brown Albatross." It is significant that for nearly all the undoubted Columbia River specimens quoted by Audubon, there seem to have been definite labels but none in the case of the supposed Chilean birds nor on such undoubted Chilean specimens as I have seen. With regard to Trudeau's Tern Mr. Burns' point is well taken!—WITMER STONE.]

**Little Blue Heron and American Egret in the West Virginia Panhandle.**—On July 30, 1933, Mr. Percy Dowden, of Bethany, Brooke County, West Virginia, brought me a female Little Blue Heron (*Florida caerulea*), in white plumage, that had been shot by a farmer along Castleman's Run not far from its mouth. The specimen is now in the Carnegie Museum at Pittsburgh.

On the evening of the same day. Mr. Edwin S. Miller and myself saw an American Egret (*Casmerodius albus egretta*), flying back and forth along the Buffalo, not high in air.

Twenty years ago white Herons were virtually unheard of along Buffalo Creek. Nowadays they are of fairly regular occurrence, a few individuals of the above-named species being noted practically every summer.—GEORGE MIKSCH SUTTON, *Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.*

**Black Ducks as Ice Breakers.**—We have, in the woods just back of our house, in Newton Centre, Mass., a shallow skating pond, several acres in extent. This pond, when flooded early enough in the fall, before freezing, is frequented by a number of Ducks, generally Blacks, with a sprinkling of Mallards; but this year accompanied by a bunch of Pintails, formerly rare in New England, but seen more frequently of late; and quite a number of Wood Ducks; and late in the afternoons, for two or three weeks, it was not unusual to have thirty or forty Ducks pitch in, just at dusk, to spend the night.

On November 11, just before lunch, I had strolled down to see what Ducks were there, when I discovered, to my surprise, that the pond had