

CORRESPONDENCE

IDENTITY OF CATESBY'S TROPIC-BIRD

EDITOR OF 'THE AUK':—In the January (1945) number of 'The Auk' pp. 137-139, McAtee has attempted to show that the tropic-bird *Phaethon catesbyi* Brandt, based on Catesby's description and plate ('Nat. Hist. Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Is.,' 2, appendix: 14, pl. 14, 1731 [= 1738]) is in reality *P. aethereus*. It seems to me, however, that both plate and description agree better with *P. lepturus*.

In the first place, Catesby noted that the "bird was about the size of a partridge" (undoubtedly *Perdix perdix* which Catesby elsewhere calls the "common partridge" and uses as a basis of comparison), a statement that would seem to pertain to the smaller species. Incidentally, Catesby describes the Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) as "a third part bigger than a common Partridge" (*tom. cit.*, p. 1). Secondly, he states that, apart from the black eye-stripe, "three or four of the large quill feathers, towards their ends, are black, tipped with white; all the rest of the bird is white, except the back, which is variegated with curved lines of black." The adult *P. lepturus* has a black band extending from the bend of the wing to the secondaries and another on the tertials. These converge on the rump when the wings are folded. The plate does not show the narrow black barring characteristic of *aethereus*. The back is white in the copy before me, not "fulvous" as in that seen by McAtee. A few lunate, dusky spots on the mantle are of questionable significance, but immature specimens of *lepturus* have such markings. I suspect that both Catesby's description and illustration were based on sketches of, and notes on, the examples that he had previously shot on Bermuda.

Finally, there is no definite record of *P. aethereus* from Bermuda, where it was reported as having been seen by A. H. Verrill,—a record that needs substantiation. The species is correctly placed in the Hypothetical List by Bradley, Mowbray, and Eaton in their "A list of the birds recorded from the Bermudas," Proc. Boston Soc. Nat. Hist., 39 (no. 8): 361, 1931. Furthermore, *P. aethereus* is unknown from Puerto Rico, Hispaniola and Cuba, and records from Jamaica and the Bahamas are most unsatisfactory. The Yellow-billed Tropic-bird (*P. lepturus*) is an abundant summer resident (February 2-December 25) in the Bermuda Islands (*tom. cit.*, p. 297).—JAMES BOND, *Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*

BENT'S 'LIFE HISTORIES OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS

EDITOR OF 'THE AUK':—Your readers may be interested to know that satisfactory progress is being made in producing manuscript for future Bulletins on the Life Histories of North American Birds. The material for four volumes, including all the birds on the A. O. U. Check-List from the jays to the vireos, has been in Washington for a long time, awaiting publication after the war. Two volumes on the wood warblers are now nearly completed, awaiting a few contributions from others. I am now starting work on the next volume, to include the birds from the weaver finches to the tanagers, and am taking this opportunity to solicit contributions of notes on habits and photographs relating to birds in the three families, Ploceidae, Icteridae and Thraupidae. Previous contributions have been very helpful, and I hope they will continue.

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