Ploceella hypoxantha hymenaica, subsp. nov.

Type: Adult male in breeding plumage, U. S. National Museum No. 333049, collected at Nong (*or* Bung) Boraphet, central Siam at lat. 15° 43′ N., long. 100° 14′ E., on June 24, 1932, by Hugh McCormick Smith (original number 5646).

Diagnosis: In breeding plumage separable in the male from *P. h. hypoxantha* (as exemplified by Javanese specimens) by having the feathers of the mantle fringed with a more greenish, less golden, yellow, and by having the upper breast, adjacent to the black throat patch, more strongly suffused with raw sienna; possibly also by greater length of wings and tail.

Remarks: The subspecific name has allusion to the bird's yellow nuptial dress, reminiscent of that worn by Hymen, god of marriage.—H. G. DEIGNAN, *U. S. National Museum, Washington, D. C.*

Variations in the plumage of the English Sparrow.—Recently the writer examined over 1800 skins of the English Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) while making an analysis of the zoogeographic aspects of their variation in size. Several of these had variations from the normal plumage. Since this species is being used more and more extensively as a laboratory animal, these variations are here recorded for such value as they may have for genetic studies. *All feathers white:* ♀, C. A. S. No. 15387, Calif.; ♀, P. M. Z. No. 10863, Calif.; sex ?, Ch. M. No. 35.209, S. C. (pink eyes); ♀, Ch. M. No. 7643, S. C.; ♀, M. P. M. No. 18059, Wis. *Crown white* (all from Calif.): ♂, M. V. Z. No. 25867; ♀, C. A. S. No. 38758; ♀, M. V. Z. No. 6596; ♀, M. V. Z. No. 24739; ♀, M. V. Z. No. 24781; dates of collection of these five specimens are respectively 1915, 1923, 1908, 1914, 1914. *Entire plumage light gray:* ♀, S. M. No. 15725, Calif. *Entire plumage light tan suffused with orange or yellow:* ♂, U. S. N. M. No. 255224, Md.; sex ?, M. P. M. No. 12104, N. J.; ♀, A. M. N. H. No. 308365, N. Y.; ♀, Cl. M. No. 25888, Ohio; ♂, Ch. M. No. 31.205, S. C. Another sparrow of this latter type was observed by Mrs. E. H. Timbrell in Rutherford, N. J., from May, 1941 to May, 1944. A water-color painting of this bird was supplied for comparison with the study skins. *All feathers of entire plumage suffused nearly to their bases with a copper-reddish color:* ♂, M. C. Z. No. 80916, Mass.; ♂, M. C. Z. No. 80918, Mass.; ♀, M. C. Z. No. 80917, Mass. It occurred to the writer that these sparrows might have obtained their reddish color in the proximity of some mill where they might have come in contact with a dye. Dr. W. M. Tyler who collected the specimens writes that there are no mills near the farming country where they were collected and that no other similarly colored specimens appeared at a later date in that vicinity. In these specimens the males have black feathers in their normal position. Another reddish English Sparrow is recorded as seen alive in Ottawa, Ont., by G. Eifrig (Auk, 27: 53–59, 1910). *Crown completely chestnut:* ♂, L. M. No. 9149, La. *Crown much more suffused with black than normal:* ♂, B. S. No. 261409, Utah. *Feathers of the throat (normally black) are chestnut:* ♂, M. C. Z. No. 4743, Mass. Seventy-nine out of 974 other males have the black feathers of the throat tinged with chestnut. Fourteen specimens contained one white feather such as a primary, a secondary, or a rectrix. Fourteen specimens contained scattered white feathers.

The abbreviations in the foregoing list refer to the following museums and collections: A. M. N. H., American Museum of Natural History; B. S., U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service; C. A. S., Chicago Academy of Science; Ch. M., Charleston Museum; Cl. M., Cleveland Museum; L. M., Louisiana State University Museum; M. C. Z., Museum of Comparative Zoölogy; M. P. M., Milwaukee Public Museum; M. V. Z., Museum of Vertebrate Zoology; P. M. Z., Princeton Museum of Zoology; S. M.,

San Diego Museum of Natural History; U. S. N. M., U. S. National Museum.—JOHN B. CALHOUN, *Dept. Zoology and Entomology, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.*

Unusual feeding habits of certain herons.—Although on many occasions I have seen herons of various species land in water too deep to let them stand, it has always seemed to me that this was accidental. In all cases there has been attendant distress and the bird has made every effort to take flight again as soon as it discovered its predicament. On several occasions, however, I have seen a Ward's Heron (*Ardea herodias wardi*) apparently deliberately dive into the middle of a lake where the water was approximately 20 feet deep. Two of these instances occurred within a few minutes of each other on December 18, 1945. On this date a light rain was falling and visibility was somewhat lowered. I noticed a large bird that at first glance appeared to be an Osprey, flying over the waters of Bivin's Arm, a small lake near Gainesville, Florida. Numerous American Coots were in the vicinity and they dashed madly away at the approach of this bird which was later identified as a Ward's Heron. Suddenly the heron dived headlong into the water where it remained for perhaps 30 seconds. Again taking wing, it circled off over the lake at an altitude of about six or eight feet. By this time I had secured binoculars (18 x 50, Carl Zeiss). The bird flew with its neck partially extended and, as I watched, it again dived into the water and remained there for about the same length of time as before. This time when it took flight there was definitely an object of some kind held in its bill. With its neck partially extended, it flew out of sight around a point of the shore. The lake in which this performance was observed is filled, even in the central portions, with submerged vegetation (*Ceratophyllum* sp.) and in the summer months the surface is nearly covered with floating mats of these plants. During the winter months, however, the vegetation is well submerged and is no closer than 8 to 15 feet from the surface. I do not feel that the behavior can be explained by the hypothesis that the bird was under the impression that it was landing in a spot that would afford footing. Neither the area nor the actions of the bird will support this idea. All actions on the part of the heron point toward a deliberate attempt to secure something in the water. A letter from Mr. E. A. McIlhenny of Avery Island, Louisiana, who has observed herons in his protected rookery for many years, states that he has observed Louisiana Herons (*Florida caerulea*) and Snowy Egrets (*Egretta thula thula*) " . . . swoop down and hover for a moment, darting their heads underwater in order to capture a twig which can be used in building their nest . . ." The Ward's Heron is not known to nest in the Gainesville area in December and I feel that the evidence points toward the assumption that the heron was securing food.

Since the original observation was made I have watched with great care the behavior of what I believe to be one particular Ward's Heron and on several occasions have watched it repeat the same procedure. On February 3, I had occasion to flush this (?) bird from the shore of the lake. In its flight across the water to the opposite shore it dived into the lake five times. Each time it entered the water head-first, thrusting its entire head and neck under water, and remained on the water while it shook its head and rearranged its wings. It appeared quite at ease in the water and held its head and neck in a fashion that suggested the graceful lines of a swan. Three times the wings were folded neatly along the sides of the body and twice they rested partially extended on the surface before the bird took wing again.

Apparently this behavior on the part of the Great Blue Heron (*Ardea h. herodias*) is well recorded (Bent, Bull. U. S. N. M., 135: 110, 1926, and Taverner, The Canadian