

GENERAL NOTES

Discovery of an Unrecorded, Mounted, Male Specimen of the Labrador Duck, *Camptorhynchus labradorius*.—About 1947–1948 it was reported that another specimen of the Labrador Duck had been discovered in England. Mr. R. L. E. Ford of Messrs. Watkins and Doncaster, London, who discovered and purchased the bird, informs me that it was mounted and a perfect drake. The specimen was found in a case of various mounted birds of North America in a country house where it had been about 100 years, but nothing was known of its history. The wooden base supporting the bird was screwed to the floor of the case by a pre-needle-fold screw, *i. e.* not tapered. Mr. Ford sold the bird to a private collector in Britain, but he is not at liberty to disclose his name or the price, which was substantial. Information has reached me from other sources that the specimen was found in Kent and was sold to Capt. Vivian Hewitt for 500 pounds, after having been offered to the British Museum. Phillips ('A Natural History of the Ducks,' 4: 57–63, 1926) gave a list of 50 specimens which were then in existence; if no more have been added since that date, the total now reaches 51. The Labrador Duck did not become extinct until at least 1878, in which year one was obtained on December 12, near Elmira, New York (Amer. Nat., 13: 128, 1879). I thank Mr. R. L. E. Ford and Sir Norman B. Kinnear for assistance.—WILLIAM E. GLEGG, *Zoological Museum, Tring, England.*

A Peculiar Pigmentation.—The throat feathers of adult males of a South American Cotinga or Fruit Crow, *Querula purpurata*, have a peculiar pigmentation which was called to my attention about 48 years ago by the late Dr. C. W. Richmond. I made as much of a study of the phenomenon as was possible at that time, but I have delayed publication, hoping that a microchemical method might be devised for analysis of the pigments involved. No such technic, however, has as yet come to my attention, and I do not feel warranted in waiting longer for it.

When a lighted match or cigarette is held close to, but not touching the feathers mentioned above, their color changes quickly from a dark crimson red to a light orange. This change takes place in the distal exposed portion of the feather, *i. e.* the part not covered by other overlapping feathers, and here the feather structure consists of highly-modified, barbuleless barbs.

These barbs are flattened and twisted so as to present a maximum surface area for color reflection. Cross-sections reveal features which are unique in my experience.

The feather barbs of many species of birds have been studied by myself and by others. In all descriptions that have come to my attention and in all other cases which I have examined, the feather barb has a cortex surrounding a medulla and both may be highly modified. The medulla, however, always has relatively large air- or gas-filled cells. This arrangement does not occur in the structures described in this article. There is an outer layer that is almost too thin to be called a cortex. It is only two to four microns thick, and it has a pale, yellow color when viewed by transmitted light. Black pigment occurs more or less discontinuously at the outer surface and in granules occurring sparsely and irregularly in the interior of this layer (Fig. 1).

This cortex or cuticle covers a homogeneous, pigmented, central core which has a maximum thickness of about 20 microns, and in which no trace of medullary cells could be found. This pigmented central core when viewed by transmitted light in paraffin sections, ten microns thick, is orange-red in color. Similar sections of barbs,

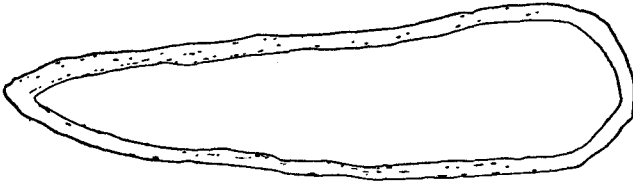


FIGURE 1. Cross-section of a barb of a throat feather of *Querula purpurata*. 800 X.

after the application of heat, have an orange-yellow to yellow color in the core. The pigment has not faded in sections which were mounted in xylol-balsam, several years ago. A cross-section of a barb showing this phenomenon is shown in Figure 1.—R. M. STRONG, *Chicago Natural History Museum, Chicago 5, Illinois*.

Vestigial Claws on the Wings of the Kiskadee Flycatcher, *Pitangus sulphuratus caucensis*.¹—In a collection of Colombian birds made by Father Antonio Olivares are 13 specimens of the Kiskadee Flycatcher, all taken within a radius of 15 miles of Cali, Colombia. Of these 13, three were taken at one place, Arroyo Hondo, and may well have been members of a closely knit group, perhaps even of one family, although one of them was collected a month before the other two, the latter birds being collected together. Each of these three (each an adult male) has a noticeable, exposed digital claw on each wing; the other 10 specimens, taken in the general vicinity of Cali and at Jamundi, some 15 miles away, show no sign of any such claws. A very extensive series of most of the races of this flycatcher has been examined and no additional cases of vestigial wing claws were noted. In his survey of the occurrence of such structures, Fisher (*Amer. Midl. Nat.*, 23 (1): 234–243, 1940) found no wing claws on any passerine bird, although he examined some 241 specimens of 68 genera of some 20 families of the order. In other groups of birds he found the presence or absence of wing claws could not be looked upon as an ordinal, familial, generic, or even specific character in all cases. The apparent implication in the present record is that not only may vestigial wing claws appear occasionally in passerine birds, but that in this case the character may even have been an hereditary trait, inasmuch as it is present in each of three birds collected in one place, and is otherwise absent. It would seem hardly likely to be a mere accidental coincidence.

The claws are fairly straight, curved slightly terminally, measure 2.5–3.5 mm. in length, and lie flat, parallel to the alular quills. The large size of the claws (which was what made them conspicuous and thereby attracted attention) is brought out by comparing with the figures given by Fisher. They equal, or even exceed in size, claws recorded by him from various species of gulls.

The present note is written at the request of the collector, who is preparing a general report on his collection.—HERBERT FRIEDMANN, *United States National Museum, Washington, D. C.*

Genera of Birds Bearing Vestigial Claws on the Wings.—Fisher (*Amer. Midl. Nat.*, 23 (1): 234–243, 1940) has summarized the known occurrence of claws on the digits of birds' wings. Wing claws have not been recorded by Fisher for the six genera listed below. Claws were noted in the genera listed while I was preparing skeletons for the scientific collections at the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology. All of the specimens listed in the table (except the two of *Buteo*) were

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