

# 100 Years Ago in *The Auk*



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## An Untrustworthy Observer

(*Auk* 15, No. 2, 1898)

### EDITORS OF 'THE AUK':

"Dear Sirs: Those members of the A.O.U. who were present at the meeting last November will doubtless recall a paper read by Mr. Edwin Irvine Haines entitled 'The Summer Birds of the Catskill Mountains with remarks upon the Faunae of the Region.' The paper indicated a 'chumminess' on the part of the birds that enabled the writer to fairly rain down records of species that ordinarily, during the summer season, are satisfied to keep out of the Catskills. Several sets of eggs of the Solitary Sandpiper (*Totanus solitarius*), Canada Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*), and Ipswich Sparrow (*Ammodramus princeps*) had been obtained, while such species as the Hudsonian Chickadee (*Parus hudsonicus*), and White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*) had been found hobnobbing with the equally abundant Dickcissel (*Spiza americana*) and Tufted Titmouse (*Parus bicolor*). A tray of skins, chiefly without labels and in winter plumage, was exhibited in support of the many extraordinary discoveries of which the above are samples. On asking Mr. Haines for the loan of his birds, he informed me that a portion of them had been sent to Dr. Merriam in Washington, but the following were submitted to me, viz.: White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*), Golden-crowned Kinglet (*R. satrapa*), Hermit Thrush (*Turdus aonalaschkae pallasii*), Gray-cheeked Thrush (*T. aliciae*), Bicknell's Thrush (*T. a. bicknelli*), Olive-backed Thrush (*Turdus ustulatus swainsonii*), Tufted Titmouse (*Parus bicolor*), and Pigeon Hawk (*Falco columbarius*). Mr. Haines assured me the Thrushes had all been obtained between the

middle of June and the middle of July; the other birds (the Kinglets represented by no less than seven specimens) bore labels indicating capture in the Catskills on various dates between June 10 and June 19, 1897. Suffice it to say, not one of these birds was in breeding plumage! This statement will, I think, be borne out by Messrs. J. A. Allen and D. G. Elliot, who also examined them.

"Now the point of all this is that Mr. Haines's ornithological statements are not in accordance with facts, and as he has figured in print a number of times during the past year or two, it is but natural to view all of his work with suspicion. One article 'The Kinglets and their Distribution' (*The Osprey*, I, Feb. 1897, pp. 73-75), asserts that he has found both species breeding in the Catskills. As a matter of fact his "June" birds are *not* breeding birds. It is not likely now that his additions to the Catskill fauna will ever be published, nor will the breeding of Brünnich's Murre (*Uria lomvia*) at New Rochelle, N.Y., as announced on a program of the Linnaean Society of New York, become a record, but it is time to put a check to such perverted ambitions, and while I am quite unbiased by any personal animus, I feel that my fellow members of the A.O.U. should be warned against a person who has shown himself to be so eminently undeserving of credence."

Yours very truly,

JONATHAN DWIGHT, JR.  
New York, N.Y.  
Feb. 21, 1898

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