

**The Passing of the Great Blue Heron at Santa Monica.**—When I moved to Santa Monica in the fall of 1894 I had just about time to get used to the surroundings before the next collecting season, and found it the best outlook of any place I had ever been in. On the north are the Santa Monica mountains, on the south Ballona swamp and between the two a sloping mesa. Here, as one might expect, a great variety of birds is to be found.

On the north side of town, twenty-two miles distant, is a large canyon the bottom of which is completely covered with immense sycamores. Here on May 13, 1895 I found a colony of great blue herons nesting and counted in all about thirty-five nests, of which only three contained sets of four eggs each with incubation well advanced, a few young and the rest apparently deserted. The nests were placed in the tops of the tallest trees about seventy feet up and were composed entirely of sticks lined with a few sycamore leaves which I suppose fell into the nest from the branches above. The nests were as close together as nesting sites would permit and were all crowded in six or seven trees.

Every year the number of nests decreased until in 1900 only four nests were left, three of which were occupied, and in 1901 only one nest was to be seen and whether it was occupied or not I could not say as I only made one trip to the canyon. Next year I shall be surprised if any are there as the birds are being shot right along, although protected by the law. W. LEE, *Santa Monica, Cal.*

**A Correction.**—The specimen upon which the record of *Colymbus auritus* from Mono Lake (CONDOR IV. p. 10) was based proves to be *Colymbus nigricollis californicus*. The bird is a young female and in some characters resembles *auritus*, but in its color and small size it is clearly referable to *californicus*. WALTER K. FISHER.

**Fall Distribution of the Western Robin.**—In partial answer to Mr. Williams' inquiry in THE CONDOR Vol. III, No 6. I will state that *Merula m. propinqua* is very common along the low mountains of Sonoma and Mendocino counties in the months of August and September, when adults and young may be seen around the springs and cattle trough in good-sized flocks. In some years they are quite plentiful in Marin County, feeding on berries during the month of October, but I have never noted any at this time in juvenile plumage in this locality. Some years they seem to find food more plentiful elsewhere and do not come in here until well along into the winter. JOSEPH MAILLIARD, *San Geronimo, Cal.*

## COMMUNICATIONS.

Editor THE CONDOR:

Will you kindly publish the manuscript I send herewith. The editor of *Science* cannot see his way to printing my rejoinder to Professor Clark's article which appeared a few days since in his journal. It involves a very important point in the relationships of birds.

Yours very sincerely,

R. W. SHUFELDT,  
Fellow A. O. U.

### PTERYLOSIS OF HUMMINGBIRDS AND SWIFTS.

In a recent issue of *Science* (Jan. 17, 1902, pp. 108, 109) Professor Hubert Lyman Clark publishes some interesting notes on the comparative morphology of the swifts, goatsuckers and hummingbirds (*Cypseli*, *Caprimulgi* and *Trochili*.) In this article Professor Clark makes extensive reference to a memoir of mine on 'Studies of the Macrochires' published some twenty years ago by the Linnæan Society of London (1888), and it seems to me has left unnoticed a number of facts that certainly should have been noticed in his contribution.

The title to this latter asks the question "Are Hummingbirds Cypseloid or Caprimulgoid"? to which, by no means difficult ques-

tion, I would reply that the hummingbirds are neither like the swifts nor are they like the goatsuckers, and decidedly less like the latter than they are like the former. As I have fully examined the *entire anatomy* of all three of these groups, it would seem that I am as well if not better, prepared to answer such a question had I only examined their pterylography, even though the latter examination included examples of every species of swift, goatsucker and hummingbird in the world known to science.

But it is only the pterylography of these several groups of birds that concerns us here, as there is no evidence before me that Professor Clark has investigated any other part of their morphology. Now Professor Clark admits in his article in *Science* that he is familiar with the memoir contributed to the Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London for April 2, 1901, by Professor D'Arcy Thompson, entitled 'On the Pterylosis of the Giant Hummingbird (*Patagona gigas*)'. He admits that "No group of birds with which I am acquainted shows such remarkable uniformity in their pterylography as do the hummingbirds" (p. 109). Further, Professor Clark admits that "So far as I can see Professor Thompson's figures of *Patagona* would answer, almost without change for any of the 11 species I have examined;" he