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A LITTLE KNOWN ORNITHOLOGICAL JOURNAL
AND ITS EDITOR, ADOLPHE BOUCARD, 1839-1904

By CHARLES A. KOFOID

THE LIFE and work of Adolphe Boucard, French ornithologist, naturalist, and collector, is of peculiar interest to American ornithologists, and to Californians in particular, because it is due to his activity that many private collections and museums of the Old World and the New were supplied with excellently prepared skins of those jewels of the tropical forests of the western world, the humming birds.

Boucard's visit to California occurred during the height of the gold excitement, for he lived in San Francisco from August 15, 1851, to August 18, 1852. Part of the time he lived on a little bay (Mission Bay?) about a mile and a half from the city; later he moved to the top of Stockton Street on the edge of Chinatown where there were then only three houses. His activities as a naturalist increased with this change of residence. In his Travels (p. 49) he says:

From March to August, I collected specimens of Natural History. Many were the species of beetles and butterflies that I collected in the suburbs of San Francisco. During my rambles I very often met another Frenchman, the well-known collector Lorquin, who was chiefly searching for insects. Lorquin was an enthusiastic collector, who had already done good work in Philippines, Celèbes, and New Guinea. I also collected many species of birds, and more particularly Humming-birds. Two species were abundant, *Calypte annae* and *Selasphorus rufus*. I found many nests of these two species during the months of March and April, and at one time I had as many as sixty of them alive, all taken from the nests. I fed them with fresh flowers and small insects. Some of them lived four months. At first I had them all together in a large cage made on purpose, but as soon as they were grown up, they began to fight so much that I was obliged to put them in separate cages. I put one pair in each, and I succeeded in keeping them alive and well for a long time. My intention was to send them alive to Europe, but even the most robust died at sea, and it was a complete failure. (See Palmer, Condor, xvii, p. 168.)

Between 1854 and 1867 he made two expeditions into southern Mexico collecting for Selater and others. In 1865 he was made a corresponding member of the Zoological Society of London and at about this time seems to have had some relations with the French expedition into Mexico and Central America which was a scientific offshoot of the ill-fated French political occupation of Mexico. Although his residence in Mexico and his connection with this enterprise is outlined in his preface to his *Travels of a Naturalist*, unfortunately no statement concerning his experiences is included in the text.

In 1891 we learn from the advertising pages of *The Humming Bird* that he had moved his business from Paris to London, at 225 High Holborn Street, where the firm of Boucard, Pottier & Co. "beg to advise directors of museums and private Amateurs that they undertake to stuff from a humming bird to a whale at very reasonable prices." It also appears that they conducted a general natural history business, supplying skins and feathers to the millinery trade, conducting auctions at which humming birds sold at 1½ to 10 pence each, and offering long lists of skins, including many parrots and 319 species of humming birds, at from 2 to 200 shillings each. *Calypte annae* is listed at 6 shillings, *Stellura calliope* at 20, and *Selasphorus rufus* at 5. Bright insects are offered for makers of jewelry and artificial flowers, books and supplies for naturalists, and a fine mounted Great Auk for £50.

The Humming Bird ran a brief course from January, 1891, when the first number was issued in quarto form, till its termination in 1895 in volume 5. Volumes three and four included his *Travels of a Naturalist*, and his *Genera of Humming Birds* appeared as a part of the journal from 1892 to 1895. The journal itself continued during these years in gradual but steady diminuendo. It changed to octavo in 1892, and from a monthly to a quarterly in the third volume, and to a single number in the fifth and last volume.

The bibliographical citations are as follows:

The Humming Bird, a monthly scientific, artistic, and industrial review. Edited under the direction of Adolphe Boucard, London, "Guaranteed circulation 5000".

Volume 1, 12 numbers, January-December, 1891, 90 pages. Portrait of Boucard. 4to.

Volume 2, 12 numbers, January-December, 1892, iv+136 pp., and (Jan.-July) pp. 1-56 of the "*Genera of Humming Birds*", 8vo.

Volume 3, changed to quarterly, four numbers, (title page incorrectly reads "volume IV"), [iv]+72 pp., pp. 55-106 of the "*Genera of Humming Birds*." Pages 55 and 56 of the *Genera* are repeated, and pp. 1-125 [6] of "*Travels of a Naturalist*", 1893, are included.

Volume 4, four numbers, [iv]+68 pp., pp. 107-202 of the "Genera of Humming Birds"; pp. 127-204, i-viii of "Travels of a Naturalist", 1894.

Volume 5, one number; 32 pp., pp. 203-412 and i-xiv, of "Genera of Humming Birds". [This number contains the statement that the publication would be suspended.]

The statement is made in the closing number that his collection had been given to the Museum of Natural History in the *Jardin des Plantes* at Paris, on the condition that it should be kept separately, the original labels preserved attached to the skins, and that the collections would always be accessible to ornithologists and specialists. Duplicates were offered to the museums at Washington, Lisbon, and Madrid.

Little bibliographic notice was taken of *The Humming Bird* or its articles in scientific bibliographies. The *Zoologischer Anzeiger* records volume 1 and four articles, but omits all reference to later articles or subsequent numbers. It omits all reference to the *Genera of Humming Birds*. The *Zoological Record* notes certain parts and the whole of the *Genera*, but that incorrectly. It lists the *Journal* as appearing in 1896 and 1897, two years beyond its brief existence. The *Archiv für Naturgeschichte* does fuller justice to these contributions. Of the 31 scientific or near-scientific articles in ornithology, entomology, and conchology in *The Humming Bird*, only 7 appear in any form in the *Zoological Record*, only 4 in the *Zoologischer Anzeiger*, and I can find but 12 in the *Archiv für Naturgeschichte*. In some cases incorrect or incomplete statements of pagination mar these citations. These may have arisen in some instances from a lack of a complete file of the numbers.

The journal, however, contains descriptions of no less than 44 new species of humming birds, 5 insects, and a mollusk, while 13 species and 2 new genera are accredited to the *Genera of Humming Birds*. It seems probable that the commercial features of the first volume discredited the scientific contents or that the journal was overlooked by the bibliographers.

It is interesting to note the range of subjects in the brief articles which fill the journal. Boucard was deeply interested in the projects for the Panama and Nicaragua canals and repeatedly carried on propaganda for both. He was also much interested in the expositions at Philadelphia and Chicago, in the Midwinter Fair at San Francisco, and in the Exposition at Paris where he represented Guatemala. He was also an ardent apostle of free trade and publishes in full in *The Humming Bird* the enormities of the McKinley tariff. He may have been a prohibitionist, for he takes a sly whack at alcohol.

Conservationists of wild life and bird protectionists will find interesting and instructive though perhaps not palatable information in his accounts of the plume, feather, and skin trade and auction sales, and in his defense thereof in the first volume (p. 1) in a serial article entitled "What is to be seen everywhere in London." The opposition to the use of bird skins on hats had brought about the use of dyed feather substitutes, which he found, on inspection of a dealer's stock, to be the toy cocottes of French children.

It appears that a severe battle has been fought lately against the wearing of beautiful humming birds, and bright birds in general, from sympathy to the poor Innocents. He [the enraged dealer] was right!! This was the true explanation of the appearance of these fancy birds. But, good gracious! Why have they made such poor representatives of Nature? With a little care and good-will they could have made something worth having. Then I would have nothing to say; but having had such a

shock when I was ejected from the above-named shop, where I asked the price of these toys, only fit for children, I must say a few words to the general public, and especially to the fair sex of both worlds, to explain that it will make very little difference to the wingy tribes, if Ladies condemn themselves in not wearing as adorns to their perfections the most brilliant jewels of Creation, such as Humming Birds, blue Creepers, bright Tanagers, wonderful Trogons, and Birds of Paradise, etc., etc., which enhances so harmoniously with their charms. I am a Naturalist of forty years' standing, and have travelled all over America from Cape Horn to California. I have explored thoroughly the United States, Mexico, Central America, part of South America, and what I can warrant is this. In the southern parts of the United States, Mexico, Central America, and in Nicaragua, I have seen thousands and thousands of specimens of various species of Herons, Spoonbills, Ducks, Geese, Tanagers, Sparrows, Swallows, Humming Birds, etc.

In San Andres Tuxtla (Mexico) I have been the witness of the arrival of the swallows (*Hirundo bicolor* Vieill.). They invaded a field of sugar-cane belonging to Don Francisco Carrère, a friend of mine, where I was staying at the time. Half an hour before sunset you could see them arrive from all parts of the horizon, meeting in one compact assemblage. . . . At the end of the month the plantations of sugar canes were nearly ruined. Another time when in Playa Vicente (Mexico) I saw another flock of birds passing over my head. They were Sparrow Hawks (*Cerchneis sparveria*). They did not stop in the locality; but their passage nearly lasted half an hour. How many thousands they were! Impossible to tell.

When residing in la Parada, State of Oaxaco (Mexico), I saw again immense numbers of Humming Birds (about ten distinct species). . . . They remained about two months, from October to the end of November. At that time flowers were to be seen in plenty everywhere; especially some myrtle trees, thistles, etc., etc. The boys had a net in two pieces, one and a half yard in circumference each, to which was attached a string about 20 yards long.

They opened one side of the net, the other part remaining on the ground or in the bush. Between the two parts they put flowers of the same kinds as usually visited by the birds. These were so abundant that scarcely five minutes passed without a humming bird coming inside the net to suck the flowers. Then the boy had only to pull the string which he kept in one hand, the two sides of the net joined together, and the bird was a prisoner.

They usually caught from 30 to 40 in the day, which they sold at a *cuartillo* (1½d. dozen) for eating. Being very fat, roasted, it is a repast which Lucullus himself would have enjoyed.

I could mention many other cases of the immense quantity of birds to be seen in America or elsewhere; but I think the above-mentioned cases are sufficient. To resume, then. What are about one million or two millions of birds sent annually to Europe; chiefly from Brazil, Trinidad, Colombia, South America, and from India, against such number of birds as Nature can boast of.

Even supposing that the fashion would continue for ever, it is my opinion that certain species of Birds are so common that it would take hundreds of years before exhausting them.

If Ladies don't wear feathers as ornaments from sympathy to the poor birds, to be consequent with themselves, they must not eat them neither, and they must not wear any furs for the same reason. Are they prepared to that? But as I said before, Nature is so prolific and such a good Nurse that Ladies can make their mind easy on that point, and continue to use the beautiful birds which harmonize so well with beauty, and refuse to wear such poor imitations of the real thing, as what is to be seen everywhere in London this year.

Besides, it is very probable that in refusing to wear them as ornaments, the result desired will not be obtained, and they would serve of pasture to the numerous birds of prey, and other animals which feast on them all the year round.

As far as my experience goes, the yearly Exportation of Bird Skins is as follows:

Colombia	200,000
Brazil and Trinidad	300,000

Mexico and Central America and South America.....	100,000
Japan	100,000
India	200,000
Africa	100,000
Europe	500,000
Total.....	1,500,000

What is that! Nothing when you think of the 100,000,000 which are killed annually for eating purposes. However, I should suggest to Governments to prohibit partially the killing of birds in certain seasons and totally the destruction of Eggs; as also the killing of all species of Warblers, and some of the Passeres, which are quite indispensable to Agriculture.

Beneath the commercialism of this tirade against sentimentalism lurks a grim bit of hard sense that man may be justified in reaping some of the annual crop of bird life as he does that of some of the plant world, but he must at the same time conserve the breeding stock and protect it.

Boucard's main contributions to ornithology were his ornithological explorations in Mexico, Central and South America, and Panama, his superbly prepared skins of the humming birds of the American tropics, and his critical suggestions as to age and sex differences in these often puzzling materials which crept into the ever-increasing literature of the Trochilidae.

It is to be regretted that the statistical and commercial data pertaining to the skin and feather trade were not more fully made a matter of record by him. The advertising pages and reports of auction sales suggest the great possibilities of significant data in his hands. These data probably contained information as to sources and market supply which at the time involved both prices and competition and hence was not confided to irrevocable print. Could these data have been recorded fully and methodically, they would doubtless have afforded a mine of information on the geographical distribution of humming birds and relative frequency of species, and thus a partial picture of the then existing status of the evolution of this most highly specialized and widely diversified group of birds. The now existing suppression of the use of these skins in millinery and the widespread sentiment against such use make it physically impossible for the opportunity to occur again.

Berkeley, California, October 26, 1922.