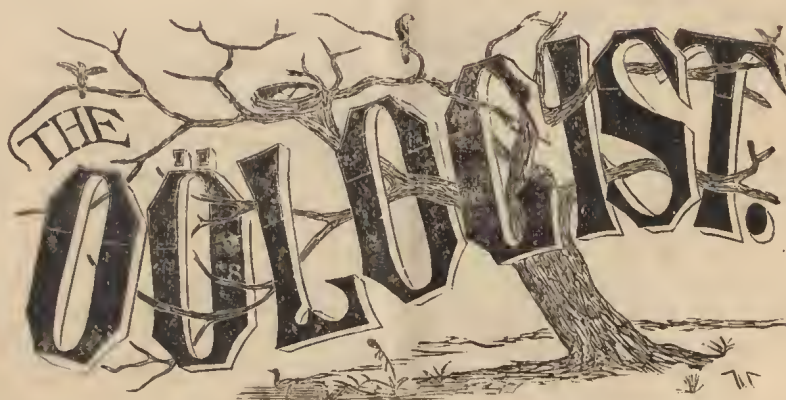


VOLUME I.

NUMBERS 7—8.

September and October, 1875.



ISSUED IN BEHALF OF THE SCIENCE WHICH IT ADVOCATES.

PUBLISHED AT UTICA, N. Y.

REMINISCENCES OF A COLLECTOR.

BY "OOLOGIST."



OR GENTLE adventure and a truly scientific recreation, there is no subject for discussion that embraces more thought, instruction and scientific principles than oology. Give me a month's leisure time, a sound constitution, and a thorough knowledge of all the principles and mysteries (?) embodied in oology, and I am the "man made"; not that I can and do possess these constituents of the true collector. The mind, though highly cultivated by other subjects, in a person with an insatiable desire for something else, is not really made, until it acquires the object of that desire; hence, a person who is deeply versed in Greek, Latin, trigonometry, &c., and who has, at the bottom of that, a great talent or natural desire for ornithology, is more at home in the field than at his books; knowledge acquired from personal observation and study, is more beneficial than all the information received through the agency of others.

From childhood, my fancy for birds strongly developed itself, and my ideas of their habits nests and eggs grew more and more acute and intense, as I, in turn, became more interested in my researches. The only impediment was a deficiency in the requisite text-books, (as from them only could I obtain the names of the birds I recognized) consequently I was compelled to name them *myself*, and, I can assure you,

that some of them received more *logical* English names than some in use at the present time. My note-books were handy at all times, and, let me add here, that two-thirds of what I am about to relate is taken as direct extracts from them. I wish to say, however, that I do not write with the intention of elevating myself at all, but simply to relate, as a sort of narrative, some of my adventures and successes while in the field.

In the year 1865, I took a decided stand on the side that my natural talent had indicated, and commenced my researches to gain the coveted knowledge. Of course, my complement of requisites necessary for a thorough collector and naturalist was incomplete, and I was obliged to use as my weapon, an old rusty shot-gun, and a home-made game-bag for my trophies. Nevertheless, my ardor did not quail under these impediments, and my routine of collecting commenced. Of birds' eggs I then knew nothing; in fact cared but little about them. I would tramp into the forests, always carrying my note-book with me, as I valued—and do still—its contents more highly than all the specimens I was or am possessed of. Soon after, I learned the art of taxidermy, and during '67, I verily believe I skinned and mounted more specimens than I have since. True, my efforts in that line did not surpass (?) those of professional taxidermists, but notwithstanding that, my birds answered my purposes just as well as those prepared by experienced hands. My exploits while traveling through swamps thickets, forests and streams of water were many, and, as some of them were quite interesting, I can do no better than to present them here, employing a chronological form for the greater part of their narration.

During the year 1867, I took a five weeks' collecting tour in the northern part of New York, and during that time I procured many new items and skins. My journal during that trip was constantly employed, and I will quote a few extracts relating to the most interesting portion.

June 5.—Before breakfast I had the good fortune to kill a male Whip-poor-will, the best plumaged one it was ever my lot to obtain. On dissecting it, I found in its stomach several common black flies, a few cecidies and a large dragon-like insect that I never saw before. One of the boys proposed to eat the Whip-poor-will! "Just to see how it tastes," said he. I told him he was at perfect liberty to do so, but finding that no one would join him in "trying it" he concluded to wait till another time.

It is a beautiful day, sun out, and not a cloud in the sky. This is our first day here and the novelty is quite charming. I shot two more Whip-poor-wills after breakfast and skinned both. We are situated on the banks of the Upper Saranac Lake, in a grove of maple trees.

June 7.—During the night, we were startled by a hoarse, croaking sound, that made the boys jump to their feet out of a sound slumber, frightening one or two of them badly. I might have been scared myself had I not known what it was. It was nothing but a Bittern in the marshes a few rods from our tent. All was quiet again, and this morning I went out to gather some wood for the fire. About a hundred and fifty yards from the tent I discovered a nest with four eggs in, but not caring for them I walked on. Soon my impulse led me to the nest again, and somehow I kind of liked the eggs; it seemed as if I might make a collection of them the same as of skins, but come to think after all, it would not pay here, as I have nothing to put them in but a skin case, and I am loth to do that. They might get broken too; so I left them.

June 8.—Ed. Walker and I, both of us fast friends and brother collectors, met this morning while collecting fire-wood when he whispered to me in mysterious tones: "Say old fellow, I know something worth knowing." I did not feel quite like asking him what but I did, and he said: "I've found some kind of a bird's nest out on the lake—right on top of the water—and it's got three eggs in, beauties too. The bird is a curious looking thing. Will you come with

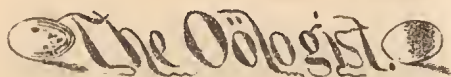
me and get it?" Happening to think of my bird's nest, and resolving to make a collection anyway, I assented very warmly and we were just about to go when it had to rain all the rest of the day, thus putting it off until to-morrow.

June 9.—Sam. Blatchford and one or two of the boys wanted me to go fishing to a creek they found yesterday, but I did not care about it and although they maintained that there were lots of trout in it, I remembered Ed.'s offer to get the mysterious bird's nest. We took a boat and rowed out a mile or so, when we came to a clump of weeds and long water grass, and supposing that the nest must be placed in these, I bade Ed. row while I prepared to shoot the bird as she rose from her nest. The bird was on her nest, but would not fly off until we got within a few feet of her, then I banded and wounded her. The bird was worth ten times as much as the eggs to me, and somewhat against Ed.'s will, I persuaded him to row out and capture the wounded bird before we secured the eggs. I knew not what it was; neither did my friend and we puzzled our heads a good deal over it. The eggs are a little larger than a dove's egg, light brownish, and spotted and sprinkled with black spots. The nest is made of rushes. It was built almost right on the water between a few weeds.* We took our prize and went home, at least to our camp, and told the other fellows what we had obtained. They asked us what it was and when we said that we couldn't say other than it was a bird, they laughed and asked us what good a bird was without any name. I said that when we returned home I'd find out quick enough.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

“*Labor omnia vincit!*” Improvement.

*We found out when we returned from our expedition that it was nothing more than a Coot, sometimes called a "Mud-hen." It was singular I did not recognize the bird before from book descriptions but the experience I had then was small, and I did not know half of even the commoner species.



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SEPTEMBER and OCTOBER, 1875.

OOLOGICAL MATTERS IN GENERAL AND
OURSELVES IN PARTICULAR.

NO DOUBT the reader is somewhat surprised at our consolidated form and double-dated sheet this month, but considering the reasons we submit, we believe that we are excusable to a certain degree. We know there will be some dissatisfied ones among our subscribers, but the majority will, we hope, accept our consolidated form as a mere matter of urgency. We offer double, if not triple attractions in it, to compensate for our involuntary compact, in the form of superior and more interesting reading and beautiful illustrations, making *THE OOLOGIST* appear more like a magazine of superior merit and appearance.

Our motive we obtained from the editors of a prominent amateur paper, and to explain it in as few words as possible, we require a short vacation from our editorial and oological duties. Of late we have been constantly pressed with orders for articles required by amateur collectors, and this, combined with a natural desire to rest our brains for awhile, and to spend a few weeks among our feathered favorites, stimulated us to follow the course we have. A minor reason, too, is that we are preparing a book (for publication soon), and by acquiring a little time now and then in our vacation,

we will soon be able to present it to our readers.

THE result of our prize offer will be presented in our November number, as it is too early now to make a definite decision.

AMERICAN BIRDS.

The Sensitive Sight and Hearing of the
Great Blue Heron.

THIS bird possesses, of all herons, a very acute sense of sight and hearing, the latter however being the most sensitive. In many instances these birds will observe the approach of a person at the distance of nearly forty rods, either by sight or hearing. His sight is rendered doubly acute to the sportsman, as his head and neck, being of the same general color as the stony shores he frequents, serves to carry the hunter too near his intended victim before he is aware the bird is watching him.

Often this bird will stand for hours over one spot,—usually a deep water hole under the roots of an old dead tree—motionless and with neck doubled between the shoulders, watching for its prey. Then it is, that the naturalist will have difficulty in shooting the king of northern waders. Silent and motionless, without the least indication of movement, he gazes into the depths of the water at his feet. The naturalist approaches, and the bird is observed very silently and slowly to turn his head until it is at right angles with the direction of the sound he hears. In this manner the Heron stands until convinced that safety must be secured in some more distant part, when lowering the body and hunching the neck, the wings take it out of range of the baffled hunter's gun, who now springs up from the grass and gazes far off at what might have been his own, but "is lost to him forever."

W. H. C.

SEVERAL subscriptions expire this month. Please make a renewal.



BIRD OF PARADISE.

[Upper fig.]

- Fig. 1. Broad-winged Hawk.
- .. 2. Great-crested Flycatcher.
- .. 3. Great Northern Shrike.
- .. 4. White-bellied Nuthatch.



FOREIGN BIRDS.

THE BIRDS OF PARADISE.

(Paradisea.)

FRED. J. DAVIS.

THE Birds of Paradise are magnificent Ravens, and contrary to the usual supposition, consist of many different varieties. It is but a few years since their living forms became familiar to civilized people. Their beautiful plumes had long been familiar to every eye, but the natives by whom the skins had been prepared for exportation, had removed all traces of legs and part of the tail and wing feathers, indeed, I can say as a practical taxidermist, we seldom get a skin in the American market but either the legs, wings or tail, and sometimes all three are removed. Of course, all of my readers are acquainted with the fable concerning these most beautiful of all birds. Indeed, it was popularly supposed that they retained their forms as they had found them in the Garden of Eden, living on no more substantial nourishment than dew and ether, through which it was imagined they perpetually floated by the aid of their long cloud-like plumage, only seeking an occasional change of position in suspending themselves for a few minutes by the long tendril-like feathers of their tails. In vain naturalists endeavored to prove the absurdity of these and many other fables, but the public mind would not be convinced, and for centuries retained and cherished the fanciful and poetical notions. For what knowledge we have,—and that is by no means exhaustive—we are indebted to Bennett, Wallace and Rosenberg.

The varieties vary in size from an English Jay to a Lark, and a perfect specimen is very elegant in shape as well as plumage. I will not attempt to describe the different varieties, but will give the general characteristics of the family. The beak is of moderate size, straight, or slightly curved, compressed at its sides and covered at the base with a feathery skin which conceals

the nostrils. The wings of moderate length, decidedly rounded, as the sixth and seventh quills are much longer than the rest. The tail is either composed of twelve long feathers, combined with many thread like feathery appendages of great length; or it is extremely long and simple in form and sharply graduated. The feet are powerful, the toes long and armed with sharp crooked claws.

In some specimens the plumage upon the sides is most peculiar in its appearance, the feathers growing to great length and splitting, as it were, into several light and delicate portions. These peculiarities are only observable in the male, both female and young being much more simply clad. The Birds of Paradise are found exclusively in New Guinea and the neighboring islands of Arnsland, Salawati, Meisol and Waigiu, each of these localities possessing one or more distinct varieties.

Rosenberg has given us the following description of the manner in which the natives prepare these beautiful birds for European and other markets. The Papuans shoot the Birds of Paradise with arrows and then strip the skin from the body; cut away the feet, and a portion of the tail. They then insert a stick through the beak and thus supported, the skin is hung to dry in the smoke of a wood fire to preserve it from the attacks of vermin. The natives of Meisol, on the contrary, do not remove the feet or any portion of the tail, as they have learned by experience that unamutilated skins command the largest price. According to information received from the merchants, the finest skins come from the northern coast of New Guinea. The Sultan of Tidor receives annually a certain number of skins obtained within his territory as a tribute.

The true Birds of Paradise possess a plume of long split feathers placed at the first joint of the wings, growing from a portion of skin about an inch long, which can be spread or folded at pleasure. The females are without this appendage. The two middle tail feathers are very long and

enlarged at the tip. The true Birds of Paradise are as follows:

The Footless Bird of Paradise. (*Paradisca apoda*) as it has been called, to perpetuate the fable to which I have alluded, probably the most common in our markets, the price of the skin ranging from \$10 to \$15, according to quality. Inhabits the island of Aru:

The Wumbi (*Paradisca papuana*) is very beautiful, extremely rare, and costly. Inhabits the islands of Meisol and Salawati in considerable numbers, and the eastern coast of New Guinea, where it is more scarce:

The Ruby Bird of Paradise (*Paradisca rubra*)—of which I shall speak hereafter:

The King Bird of Paradise (*Cincinurus regens*). Rare in our markets; has a less remarkable development of plumes. The two central tail feathers twine like tendrils, and are furnished at the end with a wheel-like feathery expansion. I have never seen more than two or three of these birds. Inhabits New Guinea and most of surrounding islands;

The Collared Bird of Paradise (*Sophorina superba*) is an extremely rare species inhabiting northern New Guinea. I have never had the pleasure of seeing this bird:

The Six-feathered Bird of Paradise (*Parotia sepeennis*). Very rare. Have never seen one. I shall have occasion to speak of the *Epimacha*, a family allied to the Birds of Paradise, in a future article. I have now before me four very fine specimens, three of the *P. apoda* and one of the *P. papuana*, two of which were bought in Singapore and presented to Prof. Root of Hamilton College, for whom they were mounted by my brother. One of them—the *P. papuana*—is the finest I have ever seen, having the wings, tail, feet and legs entire; long beautiful plumes, green throat and all making the most beautiful bird I have seen for some time.

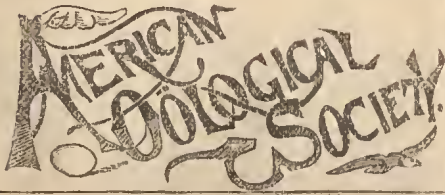
The *P. rubra*, the most beautiful of all its tribe, is extremely rare, inhabiting in small numbers the island of Waigiu. Travelers who have seen these splendid creatures

in their native element, speak of their beauty with rapture, and Lesson tells us that on one occasion he quite forgot to fire at a magnificent specimen, as he watched it float away.

During the entire day, they may be seen flying from one tree, seldom staying long in one place. Lesson informs us that the Bird of Paradise is often seen soaring high in the air, in flocks of forty or fifty, under the guidance of a leader, who flies considerably above the flocks he is conducting. Should a storm arise, they soar upward, as if to escape the power of the blast, but in spite of their efforts, they are often rendered completely helpless as the wind blows aside and entangles their long tails and waving plumes, and not infrequently causes them to fall heavily to the earth or into the sea, and many are thus drowned and others obliged to lie on the ground until they recover and arrange their disordered and matted feathers.

Upon the northern coast of New Guinea and in Meisol, the breeding season begins in May, but upon the western coast and in Salawati, eggs are not laid till November.

Rosenberg thus describes the mode of capturing it: During the dry season, the natives build little huts of leaves and twigs among the branches of a tree selected as a sleeping place. About sunset this leafy bower is occupied by a man, who is considered as a practiced shot. Silently he crouches until the flocks begin to arrive, and then one after the other he marks and strikes them to the ground with an arrow armed with a conical cap about as large as a teacup, so arranged as not to injure the plumage. Dr. Bennet says says one of the best opportunities of seeing this bird in all the beauty of action as well as display of plumage is early in the morning, when he makes his toilet. The sub-alar plumage is then thrown out and cleaned from any spot which may sully its purity by being gently passed through its bill. The short chocolate-colored wings are extended to their utmost, allowing the elegant plumes to float like films in the ambient air.



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 97, 109, 114, 117, 124, 130, 135,
 139, 142, 148, 151, 152, 155, 158,
 165, 170, 186, 203, 217, 220, 221,
 225, 226, 227, 229, 231, 233, 236,
 237, 238, 240, 245, 248, 253, 254,
 255, 261, 268, 269, 270, 290, 302,
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 401, 406, 414, 415, 417, 421, 426,
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As the election of officers can not take place in time to notice them in their columns, members will be notified by a circular, which will be sent them as soon as officers are elected and constitution approved.

We have found it utterly impossible to forward the constitution to members living in California and other distant places, until we can have it printed, when a copy will be mailed to each member.

CORRESPONDENCE.

HERE is a letter that we received some time since, that seems to us quite a curiosity, and, since it might amuse the readers of THE OOLOGIST to some extent, we publish it almost entire.

—, may 14th, 1875.

dear Sir,

What kin of a Book is MR Bairds & lawrences.. and dis it tell Whair To find birds Eggs. Pleas anuser in yor Paper the OOligest & Obblig. GEORGE II—

We were struck with the liberality of Mr. H. as he sent us a sheet of paper and a stamp, and then requested us to answer his missive in our correspondence column!

E. BULL.—We cannot inform you concerning your question. A catalogue of N. A. Birds may be obtained of us for 25 cents, but there are no prices in it.

E. T. TOMLINSON.—Mr. F. S. Peterson says the Long-billed Curlew does breed inland, and that he has found several nests.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

JACK AND I; or OUT OF HER TOILS. By J. A. Fynes, Jr. Norfolk, Va.: Wm. N. Grubb, Pub. 28 pp. 10 cents.

A book of meritorious appearance, but the contents of which are about the average of most amateur publications. In a pretty good view of the book, we found no mistakes in typography, things often found in such publications. Mr. G. the publisher, is, we believe, the amateur printer, and all his publications show careful study.

GENERAL TOPICS.

—ILLUSTRATIONS of eggs in our November number.

—If you obtain any brief interesting items we shall be glad to publish them for the benefit of our readers.

—EGG-DEALERS are scarce we should think. There are only about forty in the United States and ten (or more) in Canada.

—How do you like our "OOL." this month? It is only the preliminaries to improvements. If you wish the best paper of the kind published, *for the price*, send us your subscription.


—ACCORDING to a pretty close comparison, this season has been the most fruitful [on the average] for private collectors, since 1872. The seasons, being remarkably equitable, probably caused our birds to breed more according to "rule" than heretofore.

—A COLLECTOR in Michigan, while on a tour, found a nest (supposed to be that of a Chipping Sparrow) containing three eggs of the Chipping Sparrow, two Cow Buntings' and two Searlet Tanagers' eggs. The Tanager probably appropriated the nest as her own, after the Sparrow had laid in it. We have heard of examples of the tyrannizing spirit of the Tanager, and, no doubt this is an instance of the many that often occur.

—EARLY this season a nest of the Yellow shafted Flicker was found in Castleton, Vt. by a collector of that place, that seems to have attained quite a renown for itself or the owners. When first examined, the nest contained three eggs; subsequently, when visited it contained fifteen eggs. These eggs were taken, when the bird recommenced laying, this time depositing eight more eggs, which were also secured. A short time after eight more eggs were taken from the same nest. Not long since the nest contained eight young birds, making in all a deposit of thirty-nine eggs. In all probability two or three pairs of Flickers occupied the same nest (they often do) in which

case the large number of eggs laid is nothing very extraordinary. It is hardly possible that one bird laid thirty-nine eggs!

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