

1877

Report of Ornithology

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Recommended Citation

Hatch, P. L. (1877). Report of Ornithology. *Journal of the Minnesota Academy of Science, Vol. 1 No.4*, 305-309.

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REPORT ON ORNITHOLOGY.

BY P. L. HATCH, M. D.

January 1, 1877.

During the year there have been added to our list of observed species as follows :

Black throated Blue Warbler—*Dendræca cærulescens* Cm. Collected by T. S. Roberts, and subsequently by a number of other collectors during the spring migration.

Black-poll Warbler—*D. striata* Forst. Common to this locality while migrating. I secured him first on the 13th of May, in excellent plumage.

Pine-creeping Warbler—*D. pinus* Bd. Obtained first on the 10th of May, by Geo. McMullen. It was very rare, only a few being seen within a short period.

Solitary Vireo, or Blue-headed Fly-catcher—*Vireo solitarius* Bd. This hitherto unobserved fly catcher was exceedingly common for nearly two weeks, and was obtained simultaneously by a number of ambitious collectors, among whom, I think, Geo. McMullen had about 20 hours priority. I mention this to encourage collectors to report their work to me as early as possible, that I may do justice to their zeal in co-operating with the Committee on Ornithology.

Brotherly-love Vireo—*Vireo philadelphicus* Bd. To T. S. Roberts has fallen the rare treat of identifying this species, on the 18th day of May, at which time he obtained two specimens in excellent condition. The habits of this greenlet, I apprehend, have so many resemblances to those of the Warbling Vireo, that it may yet prove less rare than I have hitherto supposed.

Lincoln's Finch—*Melospiza lincolni* Bd. A congener of the Swamp Sparrow in nearly all of its observed habits. Was secured on the 9th day of May, by Robert S. Williams, another of our promising group of young naturalists which is doing good service in collecting the faunæ of this district. In common with several other collectors, I secured several specimens of this species, from three to six days later. It is probable that it is not a very infrequent resident, but I have seen no nests as yet.

English Sparrow—*Passer domesticus* Linn. This aggressive, pugnacious *Johnnie Chinaman* of the bird-world, came under our notice as a denizen of our city during the latter part of November. That it had been in the vicinity much longer there could be no doubt, as several had been obtained during the summer and autumn in and about St. Paul. An extract from a paper I read before the Academy, announcing its presence, that found its way into the *Tribune*, called out an Englishman's protest, and denial of the fact, that resulted in bringing communications to me from various prominent individuals in both cities, overwhelmingly corroborative of all that I had stated. I knew by personal observation that this Sparrow had become a resident of Chicago, and by hearsay also, of Milwaukee, and I had begun to conjecture his immigration along the line of railways from one depository of grain to another, or, perchance, by an accidental, involuntary passage in freight cars, when I received a note from the Hon. John S. Prince, of St. Paul, in which he stated that "in June, 1875, my brother, J. W. Prince, brought me from New York one dozen (English Sparrows), which I let out in my garden, after providing houses, &c., for them, but they disappeared, and I have never seen any since." The mystery of their presence may thus be accounted for. By their matchless proclivity to "multiply, and increase, and fill the whole earth," we may now look for a sparrow deluge.

Of the wisdom or intelligence of the esthetic taste that introduced this European to the continent, there may be opportunity for question, but in any event we must accept the situation, for it is too late already for protest.

Water Thrush—*Siurus noveboracensis* Nutt. I re-introduce this species, because doubt has been thrown upon the correctness of the identification formerly given. It arrived about the first of May. Several specimens were collected by different persons about the same time that I secured some. It unquestionably breeds here, or in the State at least.

Yellow Rail—*Porzana noveboracensis* Gm. This pretty little chicken-like Rail was scarcely expected to come to Minnesota to rear its young, yet such seems to be the case, as several have come into my hands during the past year, under circumstances to leave no reasonable doubt.

Caspian Tern—*Sterna caspia* Pall. A somewhat rare species of the Tern, collected in last spring's migration, by William Secombe. It is questionable if it breeds in the northern portions of the State, still it may, as some other kinds are now known to do, that were formerly supposed to go farther north.

This closes the list of species added to our observed birds during the year. Several remain for more critical examination, that will be duly reported when their identity has been fully ascertained.

The committee has achieved less during the year than was to be hoped for, but more than it would have promised under the circumstances, with all of the difficulties to be met with, could they have been foreseen. But they grow less. Under the stimula of more frequent intercourse amongst persons devoted to the science, and a specialized literature which has but recently sprung up in this country, Ornithology has put forth its freshly-fledged wings, and strikes boldly for its place amongst the other established sciences. The appropri-

ation for this section of the Museum, which was made last year, has been as judiciously employed as possible.

The results are upon the shelves in mounted specimens added. It is to be sincerely hoped that the finances of the Academy will permit a still larger expenditure for the same purposes during the year to come. And there is yet to be begun an oological collection, inevitably involving some expense. It has already been delayed so long that many species once common in our vicinity have become rare, and it is very difficult to secure their eggs.

A moderate sum expended with discretion each year, will soon give us a creditable collection of the birds and their eggs, found within the limits of the State.

It will readily be conceded that notwithstanding the apparent superiority of importance of several other departments of the Museum to scientific research in the direction in which modern thought is flowing, none other so readily impresses the popular mind, and enlists its material sympathy toward the Academy, as does its collection of birds and animals, nicely and naturally mounted, and tastefully displayed in the tidy, cheerful cases of the Museum.

There has been no time during the history of the science in which philosophic ornithology has enlisted so much talent and critical study as the present. Perhaps no other line of zoological inquiry gives greater promise of availability in settling some of the profoundest questions pertaining to the order or plan of creation. It is certainly a worthy ambition that would contribute our portion of material for a deep and broad foundation on which shall be erected a pyramid of scientific truths to stand through all coming time.

The work accomplished by the committee thus far, imperfect as it may be, has already received many flattering testimonials of the value placed upon it by those whose encouragements are worth striving for. Great things are not ex-

pected of us at the beginning of such an enterprise, and we have the gratification of knowing that others now firmly established, and honored by the world, alike had their day of small things, before the world in general, and the learned in particular, made them famous by recognizing the sacrifices and patience that had silently borne the early burdens through the heat of the day.

TORNADOES AND CYCLONES.

BY GEN. T. L. ROSSER.

Mr. President:—But a short time ago our papers were filled with accounts of a "*shower of flesh*," which is reported to have fallen on the 3d of March last, in Bath county, Kentucky, from a cloudless sky.

Such occurrences, though rare, are by no means new. In 1841, it is said, that there was a shower of "*flesh and blood*" near Lebanon, Tennessee, which astonished, greatly, the simple people of that locality who witnessed it. Prof. Loomis mentions a shower of oranges which fell near Naples, in 1833, and we have numerous accounts of the fall of small fish and frogs from the skies.

My purpose in calling attention to these phenomena is simply to offer a few thoughts upon the causes thereof.

We know very well that there are no butcher-shops, frog-ponds, or orange groves suspended in the skies; and when the contents of such places are showered down from *above*, we are quite certain that the material was first taken up from *below*.