



ISSUED IN BEHALF OF THE SCIENCE WHICH IT ADVOCATES.

VOLUME I,

FEBRUARY, 1876.

NUMBER 12.

REMINISCENCES

—OF A—

Collector.

BY "OOLOGIST."

AFTER a week or so of further sojourn in the wilds of the Adirondacks, our party returned to the point where we had centered, as many had come from different towns. My journal contained many notes new to me, and my cabinet contained a still greater supply of skins and eggs; the latter, however, did not amount to much, as, like all other primitive oologists, I had blown them through two holes, and in four cases out of five, these holes were large enough to admit one's little finger, even though a small egg, as I had employed a jack-knife in drilling them! How different from the nicely drilled apertures of to-day! I have not recounted more than about one third of my journal in these columns, as it is somewhat uninteresting, but may add that I had secured five skins of priceless value to me (I am aware of it now, but then, I did not attach so much significance to them as I should had I known their rarity), namely: that of the Duck Hawk, Pileated Woodpecker, Eared Grebe and

Spruce Grouse.

Three of these are mounted, the others in the skin state only.

My facilities for collecting in '69 were of more advantage to me than heretofore, and I possessed a good English shot single breech loading gun, which I always considered the best gun made. Egg-collecting had, in the two years that intervened between my northern New York trip and '69, become very interesting to me, and threatened to supercede my desire for birds themselves. My collection amounted then ('69) to fifty varieties of eggs; an immense number I thought. I used to take every opportunity I could control to go birds'-nesting, and rarely ever returned empty-handed. I can clearly remember—with the aid of a note made at the time—the day on which I made a large "collect," as I called it, and never since have I been fortunate enough to equal it. I collected on that day, between ten and twenty nests of Wild Pigeons' eggs, about half a dozen Midthens' (Stake driver) eggs, and at least no less than thirty eggs of the Field and Yellow-shanks Plovers. I considered this a splendid "collect," and have never since had the fortune to gather so many at one time.

During the spring and summer of the same year ('69), I was invited to accom-

pany a botanical excursion party among the Bahamas. Nothing could satisfy me better, and, having obtained the consent of my guardian, I started. Our party consisted of eight persons, two of which were professors of some botanical school, two of the others were students of the same science and under the tutorship of the professors. There was a sportsman, a reporter to a botanical periodical, a surveyor to the botanists, and myself. The botanists were in search of additional information with which to complete a book they were compiling. I was delighted with the idea of the grand collections I should make among the Bahamas; a collection, I was confident would transcend all others in number and rarity of specimens.

The first island we visited is called New Providence, on which I made a rare collection of both skins and eggs.

The morning after we arrived at the island, the sportsman, named George McPherson, and myself started for a day's excursion among the valleys and around the shores of the island, which is not very large. I noted some beautiful flowering plants, which I have no doubt our more scientific friends took advantage of. But after we had traveled about half through a little gulch, the sportsman said he saw something, and agreeing to meet me on the coast in a direct line toward which we were traveling, I went on. At the end of the gulch, I saw an open space, and crawled on my hands and knees stealthily, lest I might frighten some game that probably would be found there. As soon as I gained a level with the open space, I saw in its center a sluggish pond of water of some extent, fringed on the opposite side with tall reeds and a few cypress trees. I rather incautiously arose a little too high, and did not see the beautiful long-legged snowy white bird that rose at a distance of less than five rods from me until he was espied sailing through the cypress trees just out of range. As a natural thing this gave me considerable disappointment; the bird was familiar to me, and I was anxious to obtain it. The

bird was a Snowy Heron, the most beautiful of living birds in my estimation. After the Heron had flown away, I scanned the edge of the pond as far as my vision extended, but saw nothing of importance. The presence of a huge snake however was of some importance, so I moved on. The report of Mr. McPherson's gun reached my ears twice, and as he was considered a good shot, and never aimed at anything that he thought useless, my expectation was that he had secured something rare. There was about two miles between there and the coast, and on my arrival there I learned that McPherson had been waiting some time.

TO BE CONTINUED.

BIRDS' EGGS AND NESTS.

SPECIES described in this issue:—

- 501. ROSEATE SPOONBILL,
- 551. ESQUIMAUX CURLEW,
- 550. HUDSONIAN “
- 549. LONG-BILLED “
- 487. GREAT BLUE HERON.

501. *Roseate Spoonbill.*

This bird lays from 2 to 5 eggs, similar in markings and color to those of No. 499, [which will be described hereafter.] but considerably larger. They nest in trees at the usual height; breed in communities, in this respect being similar to the above.

551. *Esquimaux Curlew.*

This bird breeds in the far north, on the shores of the Arctic islands and the coasts of Labrador and upper Hudson's Bay. 4 eggs are laid. The nest, generally in an open plain, is simply a depression in the ground, lined with a few bits of grass or dried leaves. Eggs are laid in June, and vary greatly in color; the primary color is generally an olive-drab, tending to green, gray or brown in different instances. The markings are large, well collected, bold, and are of a chocolate color, varying in shade from light to gray and almost black.

The spots, as a general thing, are collected about the larger end; the egg is pyriform in shape, though not so much so as those of the Sandpiper family. Size 2 by 1.45.

550. *Hudsonian Curlew.*

There has been so little written concerning this bird that a correct description of its eggs is impossible, but they are so similar in markings to the last, that they cannot be distinguished, except in size, these being from 1.60 inches in breadth to 2.12 and 2.30 in length. Bird is very rare.

549. *Long-billed Curlew.*

This is the most common of the family, being found in most parts of the United States. It breeds on the prairies of Minnesota and Dakota, south nearly to Mexico, extending through the intervening States. Eggs are of a clay color, more or less olivaceous in some instances, in others decidedly of a buff shade. This is covered with spots of small size, though in some cases they attain the dignity of blotches. They are well distributed, but are often thickest about the large end.

Markings are of contrasted shades of umber, chocolate, cinnamon and the tints.

Eggs measure from 1.90 by 2.80, to 1.85 by 2.45 inches, which shows the liability to variation in different specimens.

487. *Great Blue Heron.*

This bird is widely distributed over the greater part of the United States. It lays three or five eggs, of a dull greenish blue color, rough shell and without any markings whatever. They measure, as a general thing, about 1.50 inches in breadth by 2.50 inches in length. Nest is generally placed in trees; often on the ground amid rushes. Breed in numerous localities, and at seasons corresponding to the latitude of the location [For further description, see Jan. No. page 78.].

The eggs of the other Herons are similar to those of this bird, and as a usual thing the nests are the same, the only variance in the eggs being in size and perhaps shape, and in the case of 493 (Green Heron) the

egg is more of a bluish green than a greenish blue.

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE SEASON OF '75.

J. M. W.

IN southern Connecticut the collecting season of '75 was an exceptionally good one. Many birds, resident in Mass. and northward, waiting for the hard winter to break away, paired and bred some hundred miles south of their usual haunts. For instance, it is unusual all summer long to see more than two or three Cuckoos here, but last season, in one day's tramp near Norwich, New London County, I found eight pairs of Black-billed Cuckoos breeding.

Again, many of the birds of prey, woodpeckers and early-building thrushes and sparrows, afraid of the lingering snow and frosts, delayed nesting until the arrival of the warblers, swallows and other summer birds, when, as if by common consent, they all bred harmoniously together.

Apropos of this, a few miles from here, there is a swamp of not more than two acres. Almost circular in shape, it lies like a beautiful green oasis, on a long range of upland pastures. The centre is a comparatively open glade, girdled by a thick belt of alders, white birch and high blueberry bushes. Here, on the third of June, were breeding eighteen varieties of birds, and of some species many representatives. On either side of the patch were a pair of Black-billed Cuckoos, with respectively two and three eggs. In the rushes a Marsh Hawk sat upon five eggs. Not half a stone's throw to the right of the Harrier, were numerous nests of the three commoner sorts of Thrush, Robins, Catbirds and Thrashers, with a solitary Song Thrush, and only just across the marsh were nesting a community of some forty pairs of Red-winged Starlings. Whenever the Marsh Hawk would leave its nest three or four sentinel Red-wings would pounce upon it and chase it around.

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FEBRUARY, 1876.

OOLOGISMS.

WITH this issue, *THE OOLOGIST* completes its first year and volume. Its career has not been untarnished by misfortunes and losses; indeed, as a source of remuneration and profit, it has not enriched us; but we started with the understanding that its first year would not be productive of any great profit. We have striven to render the paper a first class medium, through

which the collectors and young naturalists of the United States and Canada might obtain knowledge concerning the different theories and principles of ornithology and its sister science, oology, but have not as yet seen our expectations carried to a satisfactory point. Although there are but five Territories and three States in which it is not sent, that is not the height of our desire and intentions: *we want to see it circulated in ALL the States and Territories!*

We commenced this volume with the department "Oology" as the leading topic, and always intend, as far as it is in our power, to retain its character of importance. A more inanimate season for items on birds' eggs than winter, in our estimation, cannot be imagined, and it has been somewhat difficult to supply the winter's issues with fresh matter. But as spring, the long wished-for time, is near at hand, and as our list of *live correspondents* has increased, we expect that our stock of contributions will be of the rarest and most interesting nature.

Considerable expense has attended the introduction of *original* engravings of eggs and birds in *THE OOLOGIST*, and it is with no small amount of pleasure that we have learned of their approval. The series of extracts from our familiar and learned naturalists, is beyond doubt, the best line of sketches of the kind now published, each series containing an illustration, furnishes to the reader ideas only to be derived from illustrative objects.

Our principal desire now, is to secure a list of subscribers that will justify us in enlarging our paper to three columns, and it is with an anticipation of having to provide ourselves with a larger subscription book that we close this editorial.

SEVERAL subscriptions expire this month; please make a renewal.

We suppose it is scarcely policy, this being our last issue of volume 1, to send out February's papers so late, but we assure you, it has been impossible, on account of a press of other and probably more important

work, to get our forms together in time to send out this month's papers at the same date the previous numbers were issued. We trust we bear excusal, and hope that none will regard the fact as other than a mere circumstance.

WE should like to hear from our Californian correspondents as to whether they receive THE OOLOGIST regularly or not.

WE would call the attention of our readers to the advertisement of Mr. Coles, who has a large quantity of desirable eggs at low rates. Send for his list.

AMERICAN BIRDS.

EXTRACTS

FROM

Popular Naturalists.

II.

THE GREAT BLUE HERON.

Continued.

IT is by no means a constant practice with this species to breed in communities, whether large or small; for although I have seen many such associations, I have also found many pairs breeding apart. Nor do they at all times make choice of the trees placed in the interior of a swamp, for I have found heronries in the pine barrens of the Floridas, more than ten miles from any marsh, pond, or river. I have also observed nests on the tops of the tallest trees, while others were only a few feet above the ground; some also I have seen on the ground itself, and many on cactuses. In the Carolinas, where Herons of all sorts are extremely abundant, perhaps as much so as in the lower parts of Louisiana or the Floridas, on account of the numerous reservoirs connected with the rice plantations, and the still more numerous

ditches which intersect the rice-fields, all of which contain fish of various sorts, these birds find it easy to procure food in great abundance. There the Blue Herons* breed in considerable numbers, and if the place they have chosen be over a swamp, few situations can be conceived more likely to ensure their safety, for one seldom ventures into those dismal retreats at the time when these birds breed, the effluvia being extremely injurious to health, besides the difficulties to be overcome in making one's way to them. * * * JOHN J. AUDUBON.

Ornithological Arrivals

AT

FAIRMOUNT PARK GARDENS,
Philadelphia, Pa.

NOVEMBER, 1875.

- 1 Great Northern Loon. Hab. N. Amer.
- 1 Herring Gull. " "
- 2 American Rheas. " S. Amer.
- 1 Mocking Bird. Hab. United States.
- 1 Green-winged Teal. " North America.
- 1 Great Horned Owl. " West. Hemisph.
- 2 Ring Doves. " Africa; India.
- 1 White-throat. Spar. " East. N. Amer.
- 4 Fox Sparrows. " do.
- 1 Wild Turkey. From Perry Co., Pa.
- 1 Red-tailed Hawk. Hab. North America.
- 1 Bald Eagle " do.
- 1 Sparrow Hawk. " do.
- 1 Screech Owl. " do.
- 1 Barn " " do.

DECEMBER, 1875.

- 2 Screech Owls. Hab. North America.
- 1 Barred " " do.
- 1 Yellow-checked Amazon. Hab. Honduras.
- 4 Horned Grebes. Hab. North America.
- 1 Coot. " do.
- 2 Pigeons, (*Columba domestica*.) do.
- 1 King Vulture. Hab. Tropical America.
- 1 Canada Goose. " North America.
- 1 Golden Eagle. " do.
- 1 Rough-legged Hawk. Hab. do.

*This has reference to the bird under description.

- 2 Red-tailed Hawks. Hab. North Amer.
 1 Reed Bird. " E. do.
 1 Martinique Waterhen. " South America.
 2 Snowy Owls. " North do.
 1 Great Horned Owl. " do. do.

JANUARY, 1876.

- 2 Screech Owls. Hab. North America.
 1 Cardinal Grosbeak. " do.
 1 Golden Eagle. " do.
 2 Snowy Owls. " do.
 1 Pair Peafowls. " India.
 2 Hybrid Goldfinches. (between Goldfinch
 and Canary.)

The Yellow-throated Vireo.

(*Vireo flavifrons*,—*Vieillot.*)

THIS is a comparatively rare species of the vireo family; of a rich olive green, with a yellow throat, from which it derives its name. It arrives here the first week in May, and departs the first week in September. It is said to breed from Maryland and Virginia northward, and to winter in Florida.

About the latter part of June, 1874, I was fortunate in finding and securing the nest and eggs of this bird. The nest was built on a walnut tree close to our house; situated about thirty feet from the ground, between the forks of a twig, and contained four eggs, pure white, spotted with reddish brown, thickest at the larger end.

The nest is very beautiful; composed of dry grass, threads, feathers, a little cotton, and little pieces of paper; inside lined with fine grass and horse-hairs; on the outside are blossoms from the walnut tree. Of two eggs remaining in my collection, one measures .77 by .54, the other .76 by .54. *Germantown, Pa.* WM. H. ASHMEAD.

A Novel Turkey-trap.

A PECULIAR, and yet very effective mode of capturing Wild Turkeys in Virginia, is delineated thus by an author in the *Forest and Stream*: One of the favorite haunts

of the Turkeys having been discovered, the sportsman makes a trench about eighteen inches in depth and width, and four or five feet in length, with a gradual slope from the outer end, deepening to the middle. An inclosure of fence-rails is then built, the first rail being placed across the middle of the trench; this is the width of the inclosure; its length is about that of two rails. It is about eight or nine rails high, and is covered over with the same. A small quantity of grain is now scattered over the ground in the vicinity of the trap and in the trench. Once on the train of the grain, the Turkeys unsuspectingly enter the trench, and so enter the inclosure in further quest of food. Half a dozen or so will probably enter in thus, and then they find themselves imprisoned. They go round and round to find an exit, but never think of looking downward, and so never find the passage through which they entered.

A Curiosity.

WE have received from Kansas City, Missouri, a curiosity in the form of a chicken's egg, which, as we understand it, was found inside another egg, between the albumen and yolk. It is a perfect egg, with a rough and somewhat "forlorn" looking shell, and contains the albumen alone, of a perfect egg. The shell is very unequal in thickness, being nearly a sixteenth of an inch at one end, and scarcely as heavy as a warbler's egg at the sides. It is squarely and elliptically oval, and measures .75 by .63 of an inch.

WE should like very much to have our northern correspondents send us a data of the *first bird* of the *first five arrivals* they observe or know of being seen. We ask this that we may make a comparison of notes to publish.

Don't fail to get the *March Oologist*; its contents will positively be A-1.

THE Third Annual report of the Zoological Society of Philadelphia received. It contains plates of the carnivora building, a plan of the Garden, bear pits, monkey house, aviary, and a group of giraffe. The report gives the number of birds and animals received since April 16th, 1874, up to Feb. 24th, 1875, the number of births and deaths of birds and animals for the same period. The report is well printed, besides showing that the Garden is a success.

We are indebted to James Vick, Esqr. the world renowned seedsman and florist, of Rochester, N. Y. for courtesies received from him. From personal experience, we are warranted in recommending all who are in want of flower-seeds and plants, to Mr. Vick as a dealer in whom implicit confidence may be placed. He spends an immense amount of money in printers' ink and always performs all his card calls for. His floral publications are models of typographical and chromatic art. No house where the adornments of floriculture are appreciated can well afford to be without them.

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THE FIRST SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT

of the Society will be published next month. See that you get the extra. As the officers were not elected until late in the season, the report will be made exclusive of their duties, and all names, articles and rules will be credited to the Society, as no committees have been appointed on any topic or business.

Nothing would give better satisfaction, we think, to all our eastern members than to call a convention between now and Aug. first, at some central town. Let us hear from you, mems. ! We want the opinions of all.

COLLECTORS taking rare sets during the coming season, are requested that they send us a list of what they have the fortune to obtain, in order to compare notes on the breeding localities of our little-known birds, and also on the abundance of breeding birds in such localities.

The Sacred Ibis.

THE Sacred Ibis of the ancient Egyptians was revered by that half superstitious race as a bird of prediction, and was reared in the temples and palaces as religious property. No one was allowed to kill an Ibis, under penalty of death. On the death of an Ibis, it was embalmed with as much care as the body of an Egyptian, and of late, many prepared in this way, have been discovered in the ancient caves, placed away in masonry, and in a perfect condition. This bird was supposed to have been revered on account of its propensities for destroying reptiles, but that was not the authentic reason. From bass reliefs, taken from various Egyptian antiquarian temples it is ascertained that the bird was held in reverence on account of its prediction of the inundation of the Nile, which to the people was a prognostication of good crops. It is held by the modern Egyptians as an esteemed article of food, and may be seen in most all of the Cairo markets.

Illustrations next month. Subscribe.

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Office of THE OOLOGIST.

A SINGULARLY formed sparrow was captured alive not long since near Dayton, O. It was pale bluish ash, with exception of its primaries, which exhibited a variation of brown and black markings. Its beak was twisted, seemingly to one side, whether it grew so or was accidentally struck out of shape is a point for conjecture. It had six toes and intensely hooked and strong claws, more indicative of a raptorial bird than a sparrow, which its remaining characteristics implied. When captured, the bird appeared incapable of standing perfectly on its legs, and when examined, they were found to be imperfect and soft. Its notes were very similar to those of the Bay-winged Sparrow.

J. C. McD.