

AUDUBON CORRESPONDENCE.

BY FRANK L. BURNS.

A LETTER FROM AUDUBON TO HARLAN, DESCRIBING A
SUPPOSED NEW SPECIES.

Through the kindness of Mr. Alfred C. Redfield, of Wayne, Penna., I am enabled to offer an unpublished letter from John James Audubon to Dr. Richard Harlan, of Philadelphia. It is closely written on a single sheet, postmarked "Charleston, S. C., Dec. 23," and contains his original description of the *Polyborus cheriwayi*, Audubon's Caracara, from the freshly killed bird. The date of capture does not exactly agree with his published account. Apparently, Dr. Harlan made no effort toward publicly ushering this bird into our North American fauna; and its introduction was not accomplished until 1834, when Audubon published his second volume of Ornithological Biography, then fully aware that the species was not wholly new to science, having been accredited to tropical America many years before.

This letter was presented by Mrs. Harlan to the Great Central Fair for the U. S. Sanitary Commission, during the Civil war; and has since been a part of the Redfield collection.

"Description of a New Species to be named by Doctors Harlan or Pickering,—shot at St. Augustine, November 24, 1831—by J. J. Audubon.

Bill along the ridge $1\frac{3}{4}$ Inch. Along the Gap $2\frac{1}{4}$.— $\frac{9}{10}$ of an Inch high, depressed, semi-circular above, slightly bent toward the tip, with acute edges.—Lower mandible truncate, edges sharp—both pale blue. Cere broad and along with the fleshy part around the mouth and chin deep Carmine Colour.—Tongue muscular, fleshy, tipped with a hard cartilage, the latter bright Yellow tipped with black, the former carmine.—Nostrils, small placed near the outer edge of the cere, nearly [illegible]. Eyes bright umber edged with red and yellow skin—eye brows not prominent—bristles around and on the lower parts of both mandibles, black, recurved, stiff.—Upper

part of the head covered with long, loose, brownish feathers, all of which are erectile. Wings, back and rump deep chocolate or brown—edged with paler.—2d, 3d, 4th and fifth Primaries, shafts white for several Inches, crossed on the outer Vein with brown—4 quill longest.—upper tail Coverts with Tail which is composed of 12 broad feathers light Buff as well as the femorals and under tail feathers, crossed with regular streaks of brown, bro [torn by seal] banded at tip.—Shafts of the same above, and beneath White.—Throat, Sides of the head and neck feathers to the shoulders above and the [torn by seal] beneath, bright ferrugineous marked longitudinally with streaks of deep black each with rufous, divided in the center with rufous—body beneath as the back. Thighs, muscular, very dark brown, longish—Tarsus 3 and $\frac{3}{4}$ Inches long. Middle toes $2\frac{1}{8}$,—connected with the outer by a small membrane—All bright yellow.—Scutellate above, rough beneath.—Claws long, nearly straight, black.—

Total length from tip of bill to end of Claws $24\frac{5}{8}$ In. Wings $1\frac{5}{8}$ shorter.—Tail $\frac{1}{2}$ Inch shorter than to the claws. Breadth four feet—Weight $2\frac{1}{2}$ pounds.—Interior of the mouth yellow, skin of the body yellow—body muscular and tough—craw or bag of the stomach a mere pouch filled with putrid flesh—Deer and horse Hair, with many maggots.—Feed along with Buzzards and Carrion Crows, tearing as they do the flesh from under their feet. Flight, high, protracted. Elegant.—Male Bird—Breed in the Interior of the Florida, rare.—

Make the best of this you can until you receive the Skin and recollect then that the colours have greatly faded since I made my drawing which was up to Nature when alive.!"

Ever yours, Dear Harlan, I. J. A.

NIDIFICATION OF THE WORM-EATING WARBLER

The wooded hills of Chester county, Pennsylvania, especially the long broken ridges bordering the Chester valley and the Brandywine creek, have long been famous as the breeding ground of the Worm-eating Warbler. I had promised two young friends, both members of the Delaware Valley



Burns, Frank L. and Audubon, John James. 1909. "Audubon Correspondence: A Letter from Audubon to Harlan, Describing a Supposed New Species." *The Wilson bulletin* 21(2), 103–104.

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