

together; the progenitors of all the species of *Molothrus* may have been early infected with this habit, and inherited with it a facility for acquiring their present one. *M. pecoris* and *M. bonariensis*, much as their instincts differ in some points, are both parasitic on a great number of species—*M. rufoaxillaris* on *M. badius*; and in this species two or more females frequently lay together. Supposing such a habit as of two or more females very frequently laying together in the *M. bonariensis* when it was a nest-builder, or incubated its own eggs in the nests it seized, the young of those birds that oftenest abandoned their eggs to the care of another would probably inherit a weakened maternal instinct. The continual intercrossing of the birds with weaker and stronger instincts would prevent the formation of two races differing in habit; but the whole race would become deteriorated and decline, and would only be saved from final extinction by some individuals laying occasionally in the nests of other species, perhaps of a *Molothrus*, as *M. rufoaxillaris* still does in the nest of *M. badius*, rather than of birds of other genera. Certainly in this way the parasitic instinct may have originated in the *M. bonariensis* without that species ever having acquired the habit of laying and incubating in the covered dark nests of other birds. I have supposed that they once possessed it merely to account for their strange partiality for such nests, appearing, as it does to me, so much like recurrence to an ancestral habit.

2. On a small Collection of Birds from Barbadoes, West Indies. By P. L. SCLATER, M.A., Ph.D., F.R.S., Secretary to the Society.

[Received February 5, 1874.]

I have the honour of exhibiting a small collection of birds from Barbadoes, West Indies, which has been transmitted to me in spirit by Sir Graham Briggs, F.Z.S. The only authority on the birds of this island at present is the unsatisfactory nominal list given by Sir Robert Schomburgk in his 'History of Barbadoes' (London, 1847), p. 680*.

The collection forwarded by Sir Graham Briggs contains specimens of the following species.

1. *DENDRÆCA PETECHIA* (Linn.).

A well-known Antillean species.

2. *CERTHIOLA MARTINICANA* (Gm.).

The *Certhiola* of Barbadoes appears to agree best with that of Martinique and S. Lucia, but shows hardly any of the characteristic white on the middle of the throat, as do my specimens from the last-named island. As, however, my single skin from Barbadoes has

* Cf. P. Z. S. 1871, p. 267.





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