

A communication was read from J. F. Frazer, Esq., Secretary of the American Philosophical Society, acknowledging the reception of a recent number of the Proceedings of the Academy.

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*Meeting for Business, July 27, 1847.*

VICE PRESIDENT MORTON in the Chair.

The Committee on Dr. Hare's Synopsis of his paper on Electricity, reported in favour of publication of the same in the Journal, as the commencement of said paper.

The Committee on Major M'Call's communication read 13th inst., reported in favour of publication in the Proceedings.

*Description of a supposed new species of Columba, inhabiting Mexico, with some account of the habits of the Geococcyx viaticus, Wagler.*

BY GEORGE A. M'CALL.

COLUMBA \**solitaria*.

Length 13 inches 9 lines. Alar extent 23 inches. Wing, from the flexure, 7 inches, 5 lines. Tarsus 1 inch; middle toe 1 inch, 2 lines; first toe 9 lines, and longer than the third; nails light flesh colour; feet and legs deep red. Iris dark-orange. Bill above, 1 inch, 1 line, but feathered to within 5 lines of the tip; reddish near the base, whitish near the tip. Head chocolate-blue. Throat chocolate-white. Neck and breast bluish-chocolate with brilliant reflections. Back, belly, flanks, underwing-coverts and greater exterior wing-coverts light red colour, the last faintly bordered with white. Lesser wing-coverts chocolate red, forming a bright shoulder spot of elliptical shape. Quill feathers dusky, tinged with lead colour on the outer vanes. 3rd primary longest. Upper and under tail coverts bluish-lead colour. Tail 5 inches; slightly rounded; of twelve feathers; dusky.

Individuals of this fine species, which, in general contour, resembles *Columba Œnas*, were found on the Rio Grande, from Matamoras to Camargo—these were shy, and only met with at intervals. They were again observed on one or two of the smaller water courses between the former place and Victoria, but never in flocks; nor were more than half-a-dozen seen anywhere in



a single day while hunting over large extents. Their haunts were in the neighborhood of running streams or very large ponds of clear water—here four or five might be found scattered over some 20 or 50 acres; thus showing little sociability even on their feeding grounds. But most frequently he is found alone, perched near the water, or with rapid wing shaping his solitary course across the extensive waste. His flight is extremely bold, as he pitches in wide irregular *zig-zags* through the air, with a velocity scarcely to be surpassed. The meat for delicacy of flavour is not excelled by any of the family.

GEOCOCYX VIATICUS, Wagler.

(For a description of this bird, see Proceedings of the Academy, vol. 2, No. 10.)

The *G. viaticus*, which the Mexicans familiarly call *Paisano*, (countryman,) is found in Texas, from the River Nueces to the Rio Grande, and in Mexico, from the seaboard at least to the *Sierre Madre*; and being an inhabitant of the *chaparral*, or thorny thicket, he rarely ventures far beyond its borders. Although the toes of this bird are disposed in opposite pairs as in other species of his family, yet the outer hind toe being reverseable and of great flexibility, is in either position aptly applied in climbing or perching, as well as on the ground. Thus he at times pitches along the ground in irregular but vigorous hops, and again when the outer toe is thrown forward, he runs smoothly, and with such velocity as always to be able to elude a dog in the *chaparral*, without taking wing. He feeds on *coleoptera*, and almost every species of insects. And near the Nueces where the snail (*Lymnaeus stagnalis*) abounds, it is also greedily eaten. These he snatches from the ground or plucks from the low branch of a bush, and as he rarely wanders far from his abode, the prize is carried to a particular spot, where the shell is broken with his strong bill and the animal devoured. Piles of these shells are often found that would half fill a hat crown.

Although dwelling principally on the ground, he is ready and expert in catching his prey in the air, in which act his movements are full of animation—bounding from the ground with a sudden impulse to the height of 8 or 10 feet, his wings and tail are seen expanded for a scarcely appreciable instant, and his bill is heard to snap as he takes his prey, when he drops as suddenly to the spot from which he sprang. Here he will stand for a moment, his legs apart, and his tail flitted on one side with a wild and eccentric expression of exultation in his attitude, before he scampers under cover of the thick *chaparral*. At first I thought—as is the general impression among the Mexicans—that his powers of flight were extremely limited; but he will, when suddenly alarmed in



open ground, rise with a light, quick motion, and continue his flight over the bushes for some hundred yards apparently with an ease that would argue the ability to sustain a longer flight.

Though fond of shade and solitude, he will at an early hour in the morning, climb to the top of a straight leafless branch, there to sit and enjoy the first rays of the sun.

He is said by the Mexican rancheros to build his nest of loose sticks either in a low thick bush, or in close cover on the ground. The eggs are about three in number, of a whitish colour.

The Monthly Report of the Corresponding Secretary was read and adopted.

Dr. Morton read some additions to Dr. Gibbes' paper, suggested by the author, which were referred for examination to the Committee by whom the paper had been reported for publication in the Journal.

#### ELECTION.

Samuel Powel, Esq., of Philadelphia, was elected a *Member*.

*Stated Meeting, Aug. 3, 1847.*

VICE PRESIDENT MORTON in the Chair.

#### DONATIONS TO MUSEUM.

Dr. Wilson presented a collection of Shells, consisting of 285 specimens of the following genera ;

Aspergillum, 2 : Teredo, 3 : Pholas, 4 : Solen, 12 : Solemya, 2 :  
 Glauconome, 1 : Osteodesma, 2 : Thracia, 2 : Cleidotherus, 1 :  
 Lutraria, 6 : Mactra, 13 : Crassatella, 3 : Amphidesma, 6 :  
 Psammobia, 8 : Tellina, 17 : Donax, 1 : Cyrena, 3 : Astarte,  
 4 : Lima, 1 : Hinnita, 1 : Spondylus, 6 : Placuna, 2 : Terrebra-  
 tula, 3 : Mya, 3 : Melania, 3 : Neritina, 3 : Cancellaria, 2 :  
 Turbinella, 1 : Cardium, 8 : Carnita, 3 : Arca, 12 : Pectuncu-  
 lus, 5 : Nucula, 1 : Unio and Anodonta, 13 : Hyria, 1 : My-  
 cetopus, 1 : Etheria, 6 : Chama, 10 : Lithodomus, 1 : Modiola,  
 2 : Mytilus, 6 : Pinna, 2 : Perna, 1 : Malleus, 2 : Avicula, 12 ;  
 Pedum, 1 : Cytherea, Venus, Arthemis, 60 : Pecten, 8 : Pli-  
 catula, 3 : Ostrea, 2 : Lingula, 1 : Crania, 1 : Ungulina, 1 :  
 Natica, 1 : Triton, 3 : Cerithium, 2 ; Pterocera, 2 : Pyrula, 1.



1847. "Meeting for Business, July 27, 1847; Description of a Supposed New Species of Columba, Inhabiting Mexico, with Some Account of the Habits of the *Geococcyx viaticus*, Wagler." *Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia* 3, 233–235.

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