

plenty of them about, and some very tall ones, I saw none of them ascend to a greater height than ten feet. Neither did I see any of them alight on the ground. The time was shortly after sunrise. A subsequent visit to the same locality at mid-day was unsuccessful.—WALTER HOXIE, *Frogmore P. O., St. Helena Id., S. C.*

**Connecticut Warbler—A Correction.**—In the 'Bulletin of the Nuttall Ornithological Club' for July, 1882 (Vol. VII, p. 190), I recorded the capture of a Connecticut Warbler at Ebeme Lake, Maine, in August, 1879, which made the second record for the species in the State.

To make certain of its identity I sent the skin to Dr. T. M. Brewer, who wrote me (Oct. 26, 1879) that as well as he could make out the specimen was the Connecticut Warbler, but that he would get some one more *au fait* in plumage than he was to confirm or reverse his opinion.

Following this he returned the skin and wrote (Oct. 30): "I have shown the inclosed to Mr. Allen and have his confirmation of my own impressions. The *agilis* is rather an interesting specimen."

Lately the question of its correct identity was again raised, and to make assurance doubly sure I sent the skin to Mr. William Brewster for examination, giving its history. Mr. Brewster wrote me (March 28, 1886): "The case is of such importance, I have compared it carefully with large series of both *Oporornis agilis* and *G. philadelphia*. There can not be the slightest doubt as to its identity. It is a *perfectly typical Geothlypis philadelphia* in autumnal plumage." From Mr. Brewster's careful examination he is undoubtedly correct, and I would correct the record already made.—HARRY MERRILL, *Bangor, Me.*

**'Aptoso-Chromatism.'**—In the 'Ornithologist and Oölogist' for April, 1886 (Vol. XI, p. 49), Mr. Walter Hoxie has an article under the title 'Aptoso-Chromatism'—a term intended to designate the "'moultless color change' in the feathers of birds." Mr. Hoxie suggests that aptoso-chromatism is induced by the activity of the sexual organs, and claims its occurrence in both sexes, and cites in proof the changes in color noted in the Cardinal at the beginning of the breeding season. He finds that "the Black-bellied Plover, Red-breasted Snipe, Sanderling and Turnstone show a tolerably even ratio between perfect plumage and the development of the sexual organs, independent of the stage of moult." The argument is not very clearly stated, and the illustrations given relate in part to birds which undergo a change of color through a spring moult as well as independently of it. It is well known that many birds, particularly males, undergo a color change, more or less extensive and well-marked, as the mating season approaches, either in consequence of a partial moult, or without an actual renewal of the plumage. This coincidence of the change of color with the period of activity of the sexual organs seems to be looked upon by Mr. Hoxie as a relation of cause and effect, the former being due to the latter. While this may be true, certain facts may be recalled which tend to show that both are simply an expression or in-



dication of the complete maturation of the whole organism, so far as regards the first assumption of the nuptial plumage by young birds. In respect to the older birds, the donning of the nuptial dress and activity of the sexual organs are coincident phenomena of the breeding season, but that the latter is not necessarily the cause of the former seems evident from the breeding of young male birds before acquiring the nuptial dress, as is well known to occur in many species, familiar examples of which being the Purple Finch, the Redstart, and the Orchard Oriole. The subject, however, is an important one, well worthy of the most careful investigation.—J. A. ALLEN, *American Museum of Natural History*, 77<sup>th</sup> St. and 8<sup>th</sup> Ave., New York City.

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

[Correspondents are requested to write briefly and to the point. No attention will be paid to anonymous communications.]

### The Classification of the Macrochires.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE AUK:—

*Sirs:* Recent examinations of nine of the skeletons of the representatives of the three sub-orders of birds (Caprimulgi, Cypseli, and Trochili) now constituting, according to the Check-List of the American Ornithologists' Union, the order Macrochires, convince me, so far as skeletal characters go, that we are retaining in the same order birds that undoubtedly belong to very different orders. There is no question in the world but that the Swifts are widely separated from the Hummingbirds, and a comparison of the structural characters of any of the forms of these two groups will at once convince us that they are fully entitled to ordinal rank. The Cypseli are profoundly modified Passeres, coming nearer the Swallows in their organization than any other group of birds, and should be awarded a place in the system accordingly. On the other hand, the Trochili are fully entitled to an order by themselves, and further investigations are necessary to ascertain how they are approached, structurally, by other groups.

Again, this classification will leave the Caprimulgi standing out by themselves, as they undoubtedly should do, in an order of their own, as an examination of their organization goes to show that they have but little in common with the Cypseli, and are widely separated from the Hummingbirds.

My preliminary examination into the structure of this group has just been published (Dec. 1, 1885) in the 'Proceedings' of the Zoölogical Society of London, where much will be found which the limitations of space will prevent me from discussing here, but further investigations in the directions pointed out are of the highest interest and importance. It is



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