

counted more than a dozen of these birds within an area considerably less than an acre in extent. In the same locality, too, I have on more than one occasion surprised a Woodpecker feeding on the brilliant scarlet berries of the 'clammy-cherry'; they will also eat the berries of the pimento and, as I am assured, the fruit of the wild fig.

I have seen the nest holes of this species but the situations were always too inaccessible to admit of my examining them. Three eggs in my collection, from the Parish of St. Thomas, measure $1.11 \times .74$ inch.

RECENT LITERATURE.

Bendire's 'Life Histories of North American Birds.'*—The first of a series of volumes, entitled as above, is now before us. It treats of 146 species and subspecies, beginning with the Grouse and ending with the Owls, thus including the Gallinaceous Birds, the Pigeons, and the Birds of Prey. This long contemplated work, all things considered, could not have fallen to better hands, or appeared under more favorable auspices. It early interested the late Professor Baird, who for many years cherished the plan of publishing, under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution, a comprehensive work on this subject. It was begun, indeed, as early as 1857, when a small volume was published on the Hawks and Owls, under the authorship of the late Dr. T. M. Brewer. It was found necessary, however, to discontinue the enterprise, for lack of sufficient material. During the thirty-five years that have since elapsed, not only has our knowledge of the subject greatly increased, but the materials for description and illustration have multiplied many fold. While there are still deficiencies, they are comparatively few, and perhaps the best way to supply them is to publish what is known and thus the more pointedly draw attention to the gaps in our knowledge of the subject. In a work of this magnitude it is a great thing to have made a start, and we trust the present volume is but the forerunner of a series of volumes to appear at frequent intervals till the grand undertaking is completed.

Captain Bendire's method of treatment seems well chosen; the matter, as too often is the case in 'egg-books,' is not limited to a description of nests and eggs, but includes, as the title implies, the general life histories of the species treated—their geographical distribution, their migrations,

* Smithsonian Institution. | United States National Museum. | Special Bulletin No. 1. | — | Life Histories | of | North American Birds | with special reference to | their Breeding Habits and Eggs, with | Twelve Lithographic Plates. | By | Charles Bendire, Captain, U. S. Army (Retired), | Honorary Curator of the Department of Oölogy, U. S. National Museum, | Member of the American Ornithologists' Union. | — | Washington: | Government Printing Office. | 1892.—4to, pp. viii, 414, and 12 colored plates.

their breeding ranges, their nesting habits, and their food. In many cases, in respect to materials, as in the case of well-known species, there is an embarrassment of riches, and the question is what to select and how much is really worthy of reproduction. In many cases, however, it is far otherwise, and the striking feature of Captain Bendire's work is the amount of wholly new material it contains, drawn either from his many years of personal experience in the field, largely in comparatively unknown portions of the Far West, or from the letters of his many correspondents in all parts of the country. Much of this original information has evidently been especially solicited for the present work.

Captain Bendire's style is simple and direct, with no attempt at embellishment or literary effect, but this is more than compensated by the care and thoroughness with which every aspect of the subject is presented. Doubtless there are some deficiencies of detail that might have been remedied, but as a whole the book is eminently satisfactory as a compendium of the subject of which it treats. It is unencumbered with tables of synonymy and bibliographical references, although due credit is given in foot notes to the sources from which previously published information has been drawn. In his official capacity as Curator of the Department of Oölogy in the United States National Museum, recently so greatly enriched by his own unrivalled collection, he has had the fullest access to abundant material, which, however, he has been able to supplement when necessary by that of scores of willing collaborators in the same field. The illustrations are on a liberal scale, and in execution are above criticism. It is perhaps safe to say that they are the best egg plates, taking the series as a whole, ever produced, at least in this country and probably anywhere.—J. A. A.

Ridgway's 'The Humming Birds.'*—Under this title Mr. Ridgway has made a most welcome contribution to the literature of this fascinating group of birds, giving as it does a general account of their structure and habits, and a detailed account of the species met with in the North American fauna, as limited in the A. O. U. Check-List. He gives first a brief summary of the literary history of the group, extracted largely from Coues's well-known bibliography of the family, followed by remarks on 'Geographical Distribution' and 'Migrations.' Then follows an account of their 'Habits,' their general traits being discussed under the minor headings, 'Actions and Attitudes,' 'Manner of Flight,' 'Disposition,' 'Intelligence,' 'Nests and Eggs,' and 'Food,' the whole occupying about twenty pages. The nidification of Hummingbirds is illustrated by fourteen plates of nests, three of which are original and the rest from Gould. Under 'Characters and Relationships' are discussed their affinities to

* *The Humming Birds.* By Robert Ridgway, Curator, Department of Birds. Report of the U. S. National Museum for 1890, pp. 253-383, with pll. xliii and 47 cuts in the text. [July, 1892.]



Bendire, Charles. 1892. "Bendire's 'Life Histories of North American Birds'" *The Auk* 9, 375–376. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4067714>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/54323>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/4067714>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/89112>

Holding Institution

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

Sponsored by

Smithsonian

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.