XXIX.—*Notes on some Species of the Genus* Thalassogeron.

By T. Salvadori, Hon.M.B.O.U.

(Plate XIX.)

In Mr. Du Cane Godman's 'Monograph of the Petrels,' at the end there is a classification. At p. liv there is a key to the species of the genus *Thalassogeron*, which are divided into three heads :—

a. Culmen in adult bright yellow, sides of the bill black.

b. Bill generally pale, the sides not black, and the culmen not distinctly yellow.

c. Bill entirely black, including the culmen.

The object of this paper is to offer some remarks as regards the species of the first and third groups.

The third group contains only one very rare species :—

Thalassogeron carteri.

Thalassogeron carteri Rothschild, Bull. B. O. C. xiv. 1903, p. 6 : N.W. Australia; Godman, Mon. of the Petrels, 1910, p. 361, pl. 102 a.

Diomedea carteri Rothsch. Bull. B. O. C. xv. 1904, p. 44 : Gough Isl.; Mathews, Nov. Zool. xviii. 1911, p. 206.

Thalassogeron sp. inc. Eagle Clarke, Ibis, 1905, p. 265 : Gough Isl.

Mr. Mathews (*l. c.*) mentions this species as known from a *unique* specimen, the type, but it appears that a second specimen is the one from Gough Island, admitting that it belongs to the same species.

During a visit of the Hon. W. Rothschild to the Museum of Turin, some years ago, he pointed out to me that among our Albatrosses there is one which he recognised as belonging to *T. carteri*. This precious specimen agrees pretty well with the figure in the 'Monograph of the Petrels,' except in the bill, which is not so deeply black ; it was collected

during the voyage of the 'Magenta' on April 6th, 1866, lat. 35° 01′ S., long. 85° 00′ E. On the same occasion were killed two specimens of *Thalassogeron chlororhynchus*, fully adult, still preserved in our Museum. The specimen, which has now become *T. carteri*, was registered as a young bird of *T. chlororhynchus*, and Prof. Giglioli, who collected it, described the bill as *uniformly black*.

The circumstance that the three specimens were killed on the same day and in the same spot makes me rather uncertain as regards the specific value of *T. carteri*. It appears that Godman has also entertained some doubt as to whether *T. carteri* was not established on a young bird of *T. chlororhynchus*. He says :—"It is possible that, like some of the true Albatrosses, the members of the genus *Thalassogeron* do not assume their fully adult plumage for two or three years, and that the bill remains black for some time before it becomes parti-coloured."

No less interesting is a *Thalassogeron* of the first group, unfortunately represented in our Museum only by a head and neck, from an unknown locality, but collected by Dr. Cavalli during the expedition of H.I.M. S. 'Liguria.' (Plate XIX.)

The specimen, fully adult, does not agree with any of the species figured in the 'Monograph of the Petrels,' and cannot be identified with the help of the text of the work. But I must remark that the key of the species of the genus *Thalassogeron* in the Monograph is rather misleading. In it the three species *T. culminatus*, *T. chlororhynchus*, and *T. eximius* are divided as follows :—

a'. Culminicorn rounded posteriorly.....	*T. culminatus*.
b'. Culminicorn pointed posteriorly	*T. chlororhynchus*. *T. eximius*.

While the latter character holds good for *T. chlororhynchus* it fails as regards *T. eximius*. In fact Mr. Verrill's description of the latter species (Tr. Connect. Ac. Sc. ix. p. 440) is accompanied by a good figure of the bill (pl. viii.

figs. 1, 2), which shows the culminicorn perfectly rounded posteriorly, and not pointed.

Failing to identify my specimen with the help of the 'Monograph of the Petrels,' I was beginning to think that it belonged to an undescribed species, but as soon as I compared it with Mr. Verrill's description and figure, I scarcely doubted that the bird examined was a specimen of *T. eximius*. It agrees with Verrill's description, which runs as follows:—

"Forehead and fore part of the head on top pure white from the bill back to about the centre of the eyes, from there gradually blending into pale ash-grey, which extends around on to the cheeks and sides of the head, but again fades out to pure white on the throat. In front of the eye, almost from the base of the bill, and bordered on top by the pure white of the forehead, is *a very dark sooty-grey patch, which extends over the eye and around to the centre of the lower lid, and the space immediately behind the eye being pure white, blending into the ash of the surrounding parts.* Back of the head and neck light ash-grey, gradually darkening posteriorly. . . . The extreme base of the culmen does not reach to the feathers of the forehead, but is separated by a narrow strip of naked skin and is bordered by a very narrow line of dark brown. From where the brown ceases the culmen is bright yellow, gradually deepening in tint and becoming orange at about two-thirds the distance from the base, and finally dull red at the unguis, the extreme tip of the mandible being horn-colour. All the rest of the bill is pure black, except the extreme outer end of the lower mandible, which is light horn-colour."

According to Mr. Verrill the lower mandible lacks completely the transverse yellow bar at its base, but I doubt the correctness of the statement, as all the allied species have the yellow bar. Certainly the specimen we have shows a prominent yellow line at the base of the lower mandible.

The species of the first section of the genus or subgenus *Thalassogeron* at present reach the number of four, and may be distinguished according to the following key :—

Culmen in adult bright yellow; sides of the bill black:	
a. Culminicorn rounded posteriorly.	
a'. Lower edge of mandible yellow.	
a.'' Smaller; outer toe 117 mm.; culminicorn reaching the feathers of the forehead	*T. culminatus.*
b.'' Larger; outer toe 124 mm.; culminicorn not reaching the feathers of the forehead	*T. desolationis.*
b'. Lower edge of mandible not yellow....	*T. eximius.*
b. Culminicorn pointed posteriorly; lower edge of the mandible not yellow	*T. chlororhynchus.*

XXX.—*Notices of recent Ornithological Publications.*

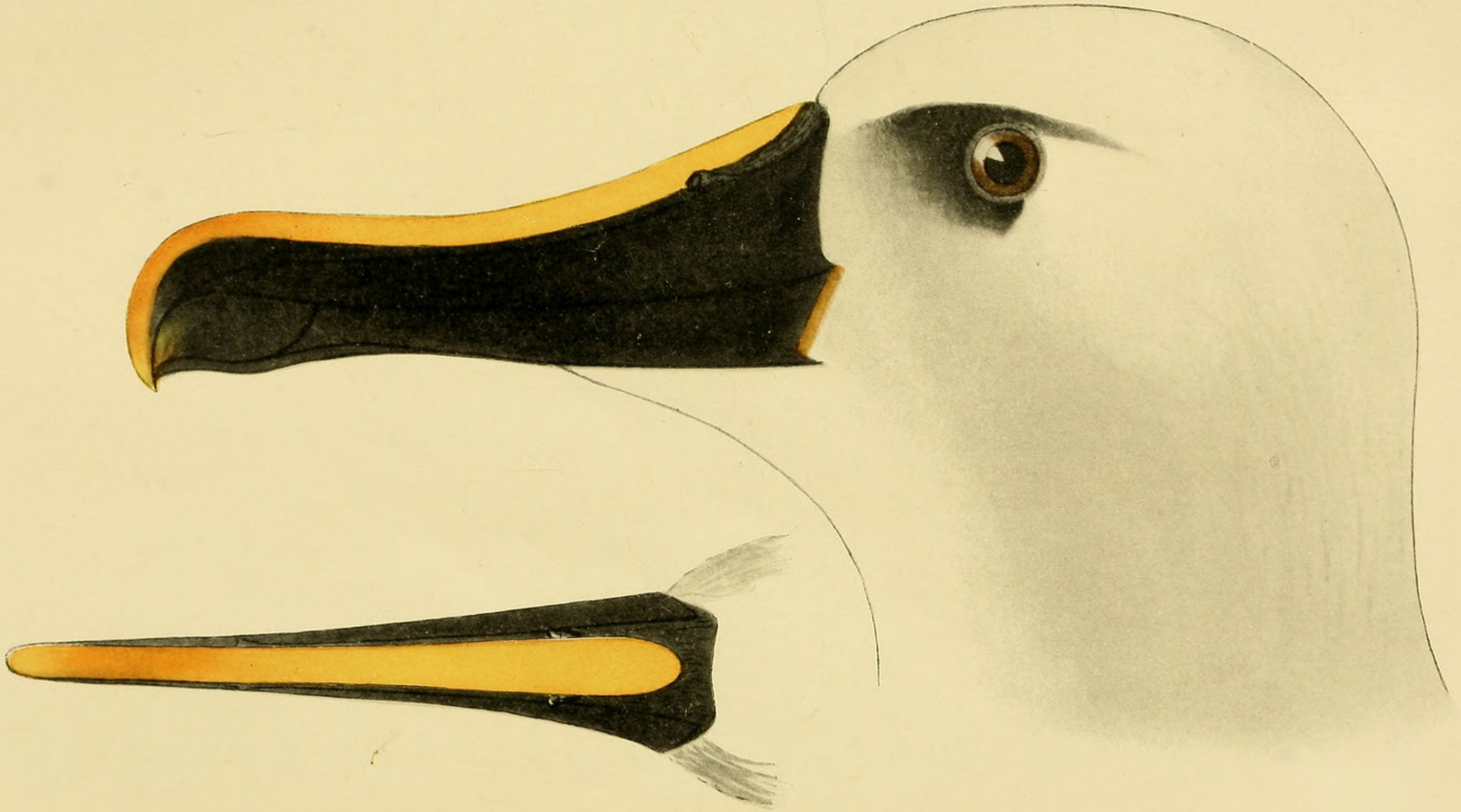
Bryant on the Western Meadowlark.

[A determination of the economic status of the Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) in California, by Harold Child Bryant. Univ. Cal. Publ. Zool., xi. 1914, pp. 377–510, pls. 21–24.]

Mr. Bryant has been for some time engaged in solving the question of the habits of the Western Meadowlark, and as to whether its usefulness outweighs its destructiveness, and this paper appears to be an elaboration of a previous one reviewed in the 'Ibis' for 1912 (p. 688).

A very large amount of work has been done and the present results are based on the examination of over 2000 stomachs taken at different seasons of the year in different parts of California, so that the conclusions should be based on sound and ample evidence.

The injury to crops which the Meadowlark is accused of, consists of destroying sprouting grain (especially barley) by boring down beside the sprout and eating the kernel. On the other hand this small amount of damage, which can be



THALASSOGERON EXIMIUS.

MENPES PRESS, WATFORD.