

SP. CHAR. *Male*:—Above grayish-ash, darkest on the head; a dull black patch behind the eye; underparts whitish, ashy on the sides of the breast; wings brown, secondaries and coverts edged with dull white; under wing-coverts pale yellow; tail brown, feathers faintly tipped and edged with dull white; upper tail-coverts edged with pale rufous.

The sexes are similar.

Length, 8.50; wing, 4.40; tail, 4.10; tarsus, .75; bill, .90.

HABITAT. Bahamas, Cuba, Haiti, San Domingo, Jamaica, Porto Rico, St. Thomas, St. Croix, St. Bartholomew, and Sombrero.

### **Tyrannus tyrannus (LINN.).**

*Lanius tyrannus* LINN. Syst. Nat. p. 94 (1758).

*Lanius tyrannus* var. *carolinensis* et *ludovicianus* GMEL. Syst. Nat. I, p. 302 (1788).

*Tyrannus intrepidus*? SALLÉ, P. Z. S. 1857, p. 232 (San Domingo).—  
BREWER, Pr. Bost. Soc. Nat. Hist. VII, p. 307 (1860) (Cuba); *ib.*  
BRYANT, XI, p. 90 (1867) (San Domingo).

*Tyrannus pipiri* GUNDL. J. f. O. 1872, p. 423 (Cuba)?

*Tyrannus carolinensis* CORY, List Bds. W. I. p. 16 (1855).

Accidental in Cuba. Porto Rico? San Domingo?

*Tyrannus sulphurascens* Herz. P. V. Würtemberg is an undetermined species mentioned by Cabanis (J. f. O. 1857, p. 241). It was originally described as occurring in Cuba and Haiti. Gundlach, in writing of this species (J. f. O. 1871, p. 268), thinks there has been a mistake in the locality.

(To be continued.)

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## BREEDING HABITS OF THE BLACK VULTURE.

BY WALTER HOXIE.

BUZZARD ISLAND lies in a bend between Ladies' Island and Wassa Island, and is about three miles in a direct line from Beaufort, South Carolina. It is about an acre and a half in extent and surrounded by boggy marsh, beyond which, at low tide, stretch

wide flats of gray mud liberally dotted with banks of 'coon oysters.' There is no landing which deserves the dignity of being so called, but at high tide a boat can be brought near enough to either the north or south side to enable a not over nice man to make his way to terra firma. Once there the adventurous collector is a moderately secure prisoner until the next high tide, although I have known one or two instances of parties under the stimulous of sandflies and hunger, making a successful attempt to 'bog' across to Red Bluff on the Ladies' Island shore opposite. On the Wassa side there is a deep channel at all times.

From time immemorial this has been a 'bird island.' A strong odor of guano pervades the air, and the soil is sometimes used as a fertilizer on neighboring plantations. It is a frequent breeding resort of the Snowy Herons, which, however, often desert it for years at a time, as is the wont of this fickle bird. Not so the Vultures. Perhaps a dozen or twenty pairs breed here regularly, the most of them being the Black species (*Catharista atrata*), though a pair or two of the Turkey Buzzards may be observed nearly every year. The portion of the island most frequented by them is the west end. Here, under a dense growth of yucca, I have taken nineteen eggs in one afternoon, and seen at the same time five or six pairs of newly hatched young. There is never the slightest attempt at forming a nest, or even excavating a hollow. The eggs are laid far in under the intertwining stems of the yucca, and in the semi-shadows are quite hard to be seen. The parent birds, however, have a habit of always following the same path in leaving and approaching their precious charge, and after a little experience I learned to distinguish these traces so well that I seldom failed to follow them up and secure the coveted specimens. This track is seldom if ever straight. It winds under and around the armed stems, and, the difference in bulk between a man and a Buzzard being considerable, the pointed leaves find a good many of a fellow's weak points before he reaches his prize. Sometimes, after a half-an-hour's crawling and peering into recesses, being gored and stabbed on every side, the reward is only a pair of uncouth, downy 'squabs,' whose welcome would give a skunk big odds in the defensive art, for, as a friend of mine once said, "Little Buzzards are like a good rule, and work both ways." "Better," quoth I, "for they work both ways at once." What an object F. was, though, on that afternoon! He had come suddenly

upon a well grown pair of chicks, and was so well wedged in among the yucca stems that he could neither make his escape nor defend himself. When he did get out he was streaming with filth, excrement, and blood, and his language was simply awful.

Quite rarely I have found eggs on other parts of the island, and once or twice in completely exposed situations, with not even an attempt to get under the protection of an overhanging bush. Possibly these belonged to young birds which had still much to learn in regard to the ways of house-keeping. I have also occasionally found isolated nests upon the outer Hunting Islands. In these latter cases the eggs have always been easy to find for, being among clean, sylvan surroundings the collector need only follow his nose—if it is a good one—and success is certain.

Both sexes assist in the work of incubation. A week or ten days often elapses between the deposition of the two eggs, but I have never observed over a day's difference in the time of hatching. Indeed, I have never found a bird sitting on a single egg. The period of incubation is very nearly thirty days, but I have not decided this quite to my satisfaction as yet. I have never taken more than two eggs in a set, but my friend, Mr. Alfred Cuthbert, of this place, took a set of three in 1884. I am not certain that two broods are not sometimes raised. I have myself taken eggs only from April 2 to May 26, according to the record now before me, but I have heard of young observed as late as August. No description need be given here of such well known eggs. One of each type is found in every pair, and my theory is that all birds which lay but two eggs at a time produce one male and female offspring. I once raised a pair of young Black Vultures which proved to be male and female. In this case the male was hatched from the long, evenly spotted egg. I cut one of his toes before his companion had emerged, so "those babies were not mixed up." In conclusion let me say that I have never yet found any Vultures' eggs under fallen logs or in hollow stumps. Of course I do not intend to cast any imputation upon the published statements in regard to their nidification in such places, but simply to record the fact that in this locality they fail to take advantage of any such surroundings.

*Frogmore, P. O.,  
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