

of Birds in the British Museum,' the latter by Messrs. Salvin and Godman in the 'Biologia Centrali-Americana.' In either case the name is antedated by *Certhia mexicana* Gmelin, Syst. Nat., I, 1788, 480. Gmelin's bird, "C. rubra, gutture viridi, remigum apice cærulescenti," is the *Certhia rubra mexicana* of Brisson (Aves, III, 651), a species not easily identifiable, but certainly not a *Certhia* (perhaps one of the red species of *Myzomela*). As no other name has been proposed for the Mexican Creeper, the bird (No. 726a of the A. O. U. Check-List) may stand as *Certhia familiaris alticola*.—GERRIT S. MILLER, JR., *Washington, D. C.*

A New Family of Birds.—In revising the North American Finches and Tanagers Mr. Ridgway has found it necessary to establish a new family for the reception of the members of the genus *Procnias*. This distinction is certainly warranted by the cranial characters of the genus, the skull, among other things, being notable from the shape of the palatines and total absence of transpalatine processes. The head and skull of *Procnias*, it may be remembered, suggest those of a Swallow, but the resemblance is purely superficial, the skull structurally resembling that of a Tanager more than it does that of a Swallow.—F. A. LUCAS, *Washington, D. C.*

The Tongues of Birds.—Herr Schenking-Prévôt contributes an interesting article on the tongues of birds to the November number of the 'Zoologische Garten,' although some of his statements must not be too implicitly trusted. Such, for example, are the remarks that the tongue of the Woodpecker is not used as a spear, but as a "lime twig" to which insects are stuck by the viscous saliva, and that it is an organ of incomparable pliancy, feeling about in all directions.

Now, as a matter of fact, the structure of the Woodpecker's tongue is such as to render it, for its length and slenderness, extremely rigid, and while the Flicker undoubtedly draws ants out of ant-hills by means of the sticky mucous with which the tongue is plentifully besmeared, yet there can be no doubt that the barbed tip serves, like a delicate eel spear, to coax larvæ out of their hiding places in trees. Herr Prévôt is probably not acquainted with our Sapsucker or he would have called attention to the peculiar modification by which the tongue is rendered an admirable swab for collecting syrup.

The tongues of granivorous birds are said to be often arrow-shaped, or awl-shaped, a term which certainly does not apply to any of our North American Finches, in which the tongue is rather thick and fleshy, and slightly bifid or brushy at the tip, being so constructed as to play an important part in husking seeds.

Herr Prévôt decidedly overestimates the probable taxonomic value of the tongue, for no other organ seems to be so subject to variation; no two species of North American Sparrows that have come under my observation have the tongues exactly alike, while two such near neigh-