

The Western Martin and the California Cuckoo at Escondido, Calif.—On June 11, 1896, three or four pairs of black, swallow-like birds were seen flying swiftly about, and were seen to alight occasionally upon the eaves of the college building of that place. On June 12 I was fortunate enough to secure an adult female, which proved to be *Progne subis hesperia*. This bird had a soft-shelled egg in her oviduct.

August 20, while out hunting for a Road-runner, I saw a bird that was new to me. It seemed very tame and had a long tail, similar to a Dove, but the flight was quite slow and resembled that of a Sparrow Hawk. It proved to be a fine male *Coccyzus americanus occidentalis* and measured as follows: Length, about 12.50 inches; wing, 7.00; tail, 6.00; bill 1.00. Iris hazel. This specimen was taken among sumac bushes on a foothill. On Aug. 22 another bird of the same species was noted.—J. MAURICE HATCH, *Escondido, Calif.*

Bird Notes from Toronto, Canada.—Somateria spectabilis. KING EIDER.—Nov. 18, 1895, I took an adult male of this species in the most perfect mature plumage I have ever seen. The bird was alone and very wild. Immature birds of this species are not uncommon late in the autumn on Lake Ontario, but adult birds are extremely rare.

Porzana noveboracensis. YELLOW RAIL.—Sept. 12, 1894, I took a female in the marshes east of Toronto, and a male at the same place, Sept. 4, 1895; also a specimen on Oct. 3, and still another on Oct. 15, of the same year.

I have never succeeded in finding this species in the spring, nor in summer before the month of August.

Cistothorus stellaris. SHORT-BILLED MARSH WREN.—On August 29, 1891, I found and secured an adult female of this species in an old field north of Toronto, the bird was a long distance from any marsh or water. On June 7, 1895, I captured an adult male in a wet meadow east of Toronto. There were no rushes near this place but the grass was very rank.—C. W. NASH, *Toronto, Canada.*

Iridescence of Feathers, as explained by an Old Author.—The modern theory that the play of colors seen in some feathers is due to the action of minute irregularities on the surface of the barbs and barbules, composing the vane, which, like a multitude of small prisms, split up the light into differently colored rays, was proposed more than two hundred years ago.

In 1666, Robert Boyle, the chief instigator and one of the most active members of the Royal Society, published a book on 'The Causes of Colors'¹ in which he treats the subject chiefly from a chemical and

¹ Experiments | and | Considerations | Touching | Colours | (Three lines). The | Beginning | Of An | Experimental History | Of | Colours. || By the Honourable Robert Boyle, | Fellow of the Royal Society. | . . . (Motto). London, | Printed for Henry Herringman at the | Anchor in the Lower walk of the New | Exchange. MDCLXIV.