

Destruction of Birds by the Great Cold Wave of February 13 and 14, 1899.—The cold wave which struck the coast of South Carolina was the severest recorded for 200 years. On Monday, February 13, the thermometer registered 14° above zero, with the ground covered with snow from four to five inches deep on a level, while drifts were two feet deep. This is a remarkable occurrence for the coast region and to be seen scarcely in a lifetime. On Tuesday, at 6.55 A. M., the thermometer registered 6° above zero. This excessively cold weather came upon us very suddenly. It was sleeting all day Sunday, February 12, but towards midnight grew suddenly colder, and when morning dawned the whole country was covered with snow. The destruction of bird life caused by this cold wave can scarcely be conceived. To say that Fox Sparrows (*Passerella iliaca*), and Snow birds (*Junco hyemalis*) were frozen to death by the millions is not an exaggerated statement, but a conservative one. There was a tremendous migration of Fox Sparrows on Monday, the 13th, following the coast line of the mainland. They apparently came from the northeast, migrating in a southwesterly direction. Thousands tarried in my yard all day long and swarmed in the piazza, fowl-yard and every place that would afford protection. They would scratch away the snow in order to find a bare place, singing—that is the stronger birds—the whole time, while their companions were freezing by the hundreds. When they were benumbed by the intense cold Boat-tailed Grackles (*Quiscalus major*), and Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) would peck them at the base of the skull, killing them and eating them. The stronger Fox Sparrows would also eat their dead companions. It was a most pathetic sight. I caught quantities of Fox Sparrows, Grass Finches, Snowbirds, and Chipping Sparrows and put them into a large cage which I brought into the house and placed before a large fire with the hope of saving them from destruction, but despite this they all died. Very few of these birds were emaciated, and the great majority were fat.

The Woodcock (*Philohela minor*) arrived in countless thousands. Prior to their arrival I had seen but two birds the entire winter. They were everywhere and were completely bewildered. Tens of thousands were killed by would-be sportsmen, and thousands were frozen to death. The great majority were so emaciated that they were practically feathers and of course were unable to withstand the cold. One man killed 200 pairs in a few hours. I shot a dozen birds. Late Tuesday afternoon I easily caught several birds on the snow and put them into a thawed spot on the edge of a swift-running stream in order that they would not perish, but upon going to the place the next morning I found one frozen. These were fearfully emaciated and could scarcely fly. Two birds were killed in Charleston in Broad street. It will be many years before this fine bird can establish itself under the most favorable conditions. The following is a list of birds that I saw which were frozen to death: Fox Sparrow, *Passerella iliaca*; Snowbird, *Junco hyemalis*; Woodcock, *Philohela minor*;

Grass Finch, *Poocetes gramineus*; Savanna Sparrow, *Ammodramus sandwichensis savanna*; Chipping Sparrow, *Spizella socialis*; Song Sparrow, *Melospiza fasciata*; Swamp Sparrow, *Melospiza georgiana*; Blue-headed Vireo, *Vireo solitarius*; Hermit Thrush, *Turdus aonalaschkæ pallasii*; Meadowlark, *Sturnella magna*; Mourning Dove, *Zenaidura macroura*; Killdeer, *Ægialitis vocifera*; Bluebird, *Sialia sialis*; Catbirds, *Galeoscoptes carolinensis*; Pine Warbler, *Dendroica vigosii*.

Bluebirds and Pine Warblers were decimated. Mockingbirds, Cardinals, Florida Towhees, Carolina Wrens, and all Woodpeckers escaped. — ARTHUR T. WAYNE, *Mount Pleasant, S. C.*

RECENT LITERATURE.

Volume XXVI of the British Museum Catalogue of Birds.¹ — Volume XXVI of the British Museum Catalogue of Birds is the last to appear of the twenty-seven volumes constituting this magnificent series, Volume XXVII having been previously issued. The first volume of this great work appeared in June, 1874, the others following at irregular intervals of, in the average, rather less than a year, the last volume having been brought out towards the close of 1898. As a general work on the birds of the world, no preceding treatise from the time of Linnæus to the present day, is at all to be compared with it in point of completeness or in method of treatment. To say that it marks an era in the history of ornithology is only faintly to imply its vast importance.

We learn from the Preface of this last volume, by Sir W. H. Flower, Director of the Natural History Department of the British Museum, that this great undertaking was originally projected by Dr. Albert Günther, his predecessor in the office of Director, "more than twenty-five years

¹ Catalogue | of the | Platealæ, Herodiones, Steganopodes, | Pygopodes, Alcæ, and Impennes | in the | Collection | of the | British Museum. | — (Platealæ) Ibises and Spoon-bills) | and | Herodiones (Hérons and Storks), | by | R. Bowdler Sharpe. | Steganopodes (Cormorants, Gannets, Frigate-Birds, Tropic- | Birds, and Pelicans), Pygopodes (Divers and Grebes), | Alcæ (Auks), and Impennes (Penguins), | by | W. R. Ogilvie-Grant. | London: | Printed by order of the Trustees. | Sold by | Longmans & Co., 39 Paternoster Row, E. C.; | B. Quaritch, 15 Piccadilly, W.; Dulau & Co., 37 Soho Square, W.; | Kegan Paul, French, Trübner, & Co., Charing Cross Road, W. C.; | and at the | British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, S. W. | 1898. = Catalogue of the Birds in the British Museum, Vol. XXVI. 8vo, pp. xvii + 687, pll. i-ic, ii, ii*a*, iii, iv, v-v*b*, vi-viii.