

clearly demonstrates. This mistake arose from taking Professor Baird's identification of Vieillot's *Piranga rubra*, — P. R. R. Rep., IX, 1858, p. 300, where he cites it as a synonym of the bird now known as *Piranga erythromelas*, in which course he has been followed by some other authors. Further comment is unnecessary; and the two birds in question remain in undisputed possession of their present names. — HARRY C. OBERHOLSER, *Washington, D. C.*

**Clivicola versus Riparia.** — In 'The Auk' for July, 1898, pages 271-272, Dr. Coues draws attention to the fact that the generic name *Riparia* Forster (Synop. Cat. Brit. Birds, 1817, 17) has page priority over the current *Clivicola* Forster (*ibid.*, p. 55); at the same time expressing his preference for the adoption of the former. The A. O. U. Committee, however, refused to accept *Riparia* on the ground that *Clivicola* was used by the 'first reviser.' These two names are founded upon the same species and are both unaccompanied by diagnoses, so that there can be no question of their equal pertinency. Canon XVIII of the A. O. U. Code, which treats of generic terms published simultaneously, makes no definite provision for just this kind of a case; but in the preceding canon, with regard to specific names, the following occurs: "Of names of undoubtedly equal pertinency, and founded upon the same condition of sex, age, or season, that is to be preferred which stands first in the book." Therefore, unless we are to have on this point arbitrarily different rules for species and genera, a procedure apparently both unnecessary and undesirable, *Clivicola* must give way to *Riparia*. That the above quoted principle of page priority was intended to apply to genera as well as to species is evidenced by rulings of the Committee; as witness *Guara*, instead of *Leucibis*, which was adopted by the 'first reviser' — a perfectly parallel case.

While recourse to the decision of the 'first reviser' is often attended by more or less uncertainty, arising from the possibility of overlooking some obscure publication, the great advantage in the strict application of the principle of anteriority, as priority of pagination or sequence in the same book may be called, is that it furnishes means for a definite and final decision, thereby contributing to hasten on the millennium of zoölogical nomenclature—stability of names. — HARRY C. OBERHOLSER, *Washington, D. C.*

**Nest of Long-billed Marsh Wren lined with a Snake Skin.** — On June 6, 1898, on the meadow near Rutherford, New Jersey, I found a curious nest of *Cistothorus palustris*. It was fastened two feet above the water, to some green cat-tails, and was composed of reeds and broad grasses, and lined with a cast-off snake skin which was about a foot long. It contained six fresh eggs. — JOSIAH H. CLARK, *Paterson, N. J.*

**The Short-billed Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus stellaris*) in Maine.** — In Smith's List of the Birds of Maine (*cf.* Smith, Forest and Stream, Vol.

XIX, p. 445) this species is credited to Maine upon the strength of nests and eggs said to have been taken near Bangor. In my recently published list (*cf.* Knight, List of Birds of Maine, p. 141) the species in question is hypothetically included upon Mr. Smith's evidence, and upon the belief that I had seen the species in a marsh near this city, though at that time I had not secured any specimens.

May 30, 1898, I secured an adult male of this species, in full breeding plumage, which has already been recorded (*cf.* Knight, Maine Sportsman, Dec. 1898, p. 8). This specimen was secured in a low, somewhat bushy meadow within two miles of the Bangor postoffice, the locality being the same where I thought I had seen the species during the late summer two or three years previously.

On the day when this specimen was taken, I was returning from a short outing, and when passing the meadow a gust of wind brought to my ear the notes of an unknown song uttered in a key that seemed dimly familiar. Again the notes were heard as I stood eagerly listening, and then my mind was carried back to the sage-clad hills of southern California where oft I had stood and listened to the echoing notes of the Pallid Wren Tit, similar, yet still far different from those just heard.

Again and yet again the song was heard in different directions, and soon the musicians, five Short-billed Marsh Wrens, were located in different portions of the meadow. While singing they seemed to perch conspicuously on the tops of low bushes, but on being approached they would descend into the tangled growth of sedges and skulk along in advance of me, uttering a low grating note of alarm or defiance.

The females seemed quieter and kept out of the way, though two individuals were seen which seemed, judging by the attention paid them by what were probably their mates, to belong to the gentler sex.

The specimen secured was judged to be a male and on dissection proved of this sex. For several days thereafter I frequented the locality in hopes of finding nests or eggs, but though the birds remained all summer I was unable to get proof positive that they nested, but of course they did so. My departure for California in mid-August put an end to further observations for the season.

A second specimen, also a male, had been secured on July 3. On comparison with individuals loaned me by Mr. Brewster, which were taken near Cambridge and elsewhere in Massachusetts, the Bangor birds were found practically identical in coloration and measurements.

The specimens were also compared with a series of birds from the U. S. National Museum collection, loaned me through the kindness of Prof. Ridgway, and found to be practically undifferentiable from any of these save two very pale-colored examples from Dakota.

Judging by the series examined, our eastern specimens are all referable to the only recognized race now on our list. Examples from the regions bordering the Plains are considerably paler in coloration, especially on the back, and study of a series of breeding birds from the West may show

sufficient differences to make advisable their separation as a subspecies.—  
ORA W. KNIGHT, *Bangor, Me.*

**A Provident Nuthatch**—Visiting Central Park on the morning of November 28, 1898, after a snowfall of  $9\frac{1}{4}$  inches, I carried a quantity of bread for the birds, and nuts for the squirrels. The squirrels did not appear until nearly noon, but the birds were quite ready for breakfast at 9.30 A. M. While crumbling bread for the White-throated Sparrows, who were exceedingly hungry and gave loud calls of delight, summoning their friends to the spot, a fine Fox Sparrow came and ate greedily.

In a few moments a White-breasted Nuthatch came and hopped about on a tree trunk, calling, *youh, youh, youh*, rapidly, as if greatly pleased, then he flew to the snow, seized as large a piece of bread as he could carry, and flew high up in a tree some distance away. I expected to see him eat it, although in all my experience with birds in bad weather I had never seen a Nuthatch eat bread, though they often eat bits of nuts thrown to them, and are very tame. This wise fellow hunted till he found a suitable cranny, then poked in his bread, and hammered it down several times with his bill. When he got it well stored, he went back to the tree near me, calling *youh, youh*, as if to say, "more please." Then I threw him a piece of pecan nut in the shell, and he took it at once, flew to another tree and looked till he found a hole, hammered it down as he did the bread, and returned for more. After the operation had been repeated many times, I was forced to walk and warm my feet, for the birds were so fascinating I had stood an hour in the snow.

Returning to the spot sometime afterward, the White-throats were singing, and the Fox Sparrow was tuning up too. As they were still feeding, I crumbled more bread, and soon the Nuthatch reappeared, and at intervals carried off pieces of nuts, storing each in a separate tree.

When my bread and pecans were distributed, I walked away and found some squirrels and gave them chestnuts. Mr. Nuthatch appeared again, and came low down on a vine, hanging his head off sideways, and calling loudly to attract attention. I threw him half a chestnut which he took immediately, and after a long search found a safe place in a cherry tree. He went off awhile, but later returned and took a whole chestnut and went so far I lost sight of him. I walked away and returned in a half-hour to the place. The Nuthatch came again and called, and took chestnuts several times and hid them.

Since writing the above the Nuthatch appeared on three consecutive days, and took bread and nuts many times and hid them. Unfortunately a friend and I saw a squirrel find his cache, and rob him twice.

Can any reader tell me if it is possible for Nuthatches to store their treasures where squirrels cannot get at them?—F. HUBERTA FOOTE,  
*New York City.*