

utmost possible stability for names of higher groups, it may be contended to be inadvisable to change family or subfamily names which have been founded upon generic terms now held as subgeneric; while still restricting the proper formation of such names to terms which have generic rank at the time of such formation.

If the former, however, be the proper view, it is in order to inquire why we still retain the family name Podicipidæ for the Grebes, while *Podiceps* continues to hold but subgeneric rank. The proper name for the group is probably Colymbidæ, as has already been announced by Dr. Stejneger (Stand. Nat. Hist., IV, 1885, p. 66). By the same criterion Phalerinæ is untenable, being based upon *Phaleris*, a subgenus of *Simorhynchus*, and if it be still deemed advisable to retain a subfamily distinction apart from the Fraterculinæ, may possibly best be called Simorhynchinæ. Then, too, so long as *Fuligula* stands only as a subgenus, the subfamily designation Fuligulinæ must be displaced. There are, however, structural characters quite sufficient to entitle *Fuligula* to full generic rank, — characters too well known to require enumeration in this connection, and which now receive due recognition almost universally except among American ornithologists. — HARRY C. OBERHOLSER, Washington, D. C.

‘Revival of the Sexual Passion in Birds in Autumn.’ — In addition to the notes of Messrs. Brewster and Chapman which have lately appeared in ‘The Auk’ on the above subject the following observations may be of interest. From my Journal for September 2, 1898, Jamestown, R. I., I copy the following:—“This morning a number of Purple Martins (*Progne subis*) were seen alighting on the rigging of the small boats anchored in the harbor, they being not uncommon here early in September; later in the morning they were in good numbers (15 or 20 birds) along the roadsides in company with the Tree Swallows. The Martins almost always alighted on the cross bars of the telegraph poles, rather than with the Swallows on the wires. While I was watching two birds, supposedly young, they were seen a number of times to go through the actions of copulation.”

Another record was made on September 15, 1898. — “While sitting in the blind (Jamestown, R. I., Round Marsh) a Sharp-tailed Sparrow (*Ammodramus caudacutus*) came and lit near by and performed some interesting antics. The bird would now and then utter a few hurried notes, run a few feet and jump excitedly into the air. The bird also from time to time (five times) went through the actions of copulation on a little, cropped off tussock of grass about the size of its body. I was within a few feet of the bird, being protected by the blind, and am positive that its actions were those of copulation. Possibly this bird was mentally deranged. I took the bird and found it to be a young male, its sexual organs of normal size for that time of season. Two interesting questions present themselves. Is the accompanying non-enlargement of

their sexual glands due to their being still non-functional, or is the passion caused by simple sensory, nervous excitement? Is the autumn song period, of some species, correlated with this passion?

The species of birds that have now been recorded, as far as I know, as showing this autumn habit, include the Bluebird, English Sparrow, Bank Swallow, Tree Swallow, Eave Swallow, Barn Swallow (?), Purple Martin and Sharp-tailed Sparrow, and I have no doubt that further observation will add many other species to the list.—REGINALD HEBER HOWE, JR., *Longwood, Mass.*

**Émigration accidentelle d'oiseaux.**—Un fait rare vient d'appeler notre attention à Guanajuato. Pendant les premiers jours du mois de mars ont apparu subitement des bandes de perroquets (*Chrysotis levaillantii*) aux alentours de Silao à vingt kilomètres de Guanajuato. Un peu plus tard ils se sont encore rapprochés de nous à 4 ou 5 kilomètres dans un ravin, et ensuite à une grande ferme appelée Santa Teresa entre Silao et Guanajuato : enfin on les a vues dans les jardins de Marefil à six kilomètres d'ici.

Ces perroquets étoient accompagnés de nombreuses tourterelles violettes (*Columba flavirostris*).

Or ces oiseaux n'habitent que les régions chaudes de Vera-Cruz et de la Huasteca Veracruzana.

Dans l'État de Guanajuato on ne cultive presque par les fruits de terre-chaude, de sorte que ces oiseaux, ne rencontrant pas leurs aliments habituels, ont dévoré les limons doux, les avocats et quelques autres fruits. A Santa Teresa ils se sont abattus sur un champs de luzerne qu'ils ont dévasté au point qu'on a été obligé de faire une battue pour les détruire ou les éloigner. Ils se sont en allés vers la fin de mars.

Il paraît que ces oiseaux ont été vus en grande quantité dans quelques points de l'État de Mexico.

Or il y a en une cause à cette extraordinaire émigration ; la voici.

Le 12 du mois de février dernier de fortes gelées et une neige assez abondante ont été observées précisément dans cette Huasteca Veracruzana : le maïs, les bananiérs, les arbres fruitiers en général, ont été complètement détruits, de sorte que le froid et le manque d'aliments a forcé les oiseaux en question à chercher un climat plus favorable, et les ont rejétés vers les plateaux du centre. La perte de café surtout a été presque complète de sorte que le grain qui valait 9 piastres les 14 kilogrammes, s'est vendu à 14 piastres. La canne à sucre a été aussi en grande partie détruite. En somme on calcule à près d'un million de piastres la perte totale : jusqu'aux racines des arbres fruitiers, tout a gélé.

Un autre phénomène analogue mais du à une cause tout-à-fait contraire, s'est manifesté au nord de l'État de Guanajuato. Les perroquets et autres oiseaux<sup>1</sup> entre le nord de l'État de Vera-Cruz, le sud-est

<sup>1</sup> Se sont répandus dans les provinces de cette région.