

Early Occurrence of the Black Scoter in Maryland and Virginia.—On Aug. 26, 1900, I came across a male and four females of the Black Scoter just inside the surf at Gargathy Inlet, Accomac County, Virginia. They were quite tame and allowed of close approach. On being flushed they flew outside the breakers and pitched. On Aug. 29 I reached Ocean City, Maryland, and saw 20 in a bunch just outside the surf. Capt. Christopher Ludlam, a most careful observer, told me that he had first observed them at this point on Aug. 27, when a bunch of about 100 were just outside the surf. On Aug. 30 I saw a bunch of about 20, and possibly the same bunch of about 20 on the 31st. These were carefully observed through a strong field glass, so the identity is assured.—F. O. KIRKWOOD, *Baltimore, Md.*

The Purple Gallinule in Massachusetts in the Breeding Season.—In August, 1899, I saw at the farm of Mr. A. J. Severance in Rowley, Mass., a mounted specimen of the Purple Gallinule (*Ionornis martinica*). The bird was caught in June, 1897, by a cat at a pond in the adjoining town of Boxford. Another bird, supposed to be of the same species and the mate, was seen at the pond. This appears to be the second record of the occurrence of *Ionornis martinica* in Essex county, the specimen previously noted being preserved in the collection of the Peabody Academy of Science at Salem.

Another hitherto unpublished record of *Ionornis martinica* in Massachusetts is that of a beautiful specimen which I saw in the flesh in April, 1890, at the stall of W. W. Palmer, Faneuil Hall Market, Boston. The bird had been caught in a muskrat trap at Chatham.—J. A. FARLEY, *Malden, Mass.*

Occurrence of Baird's Sandpiper in Sussex, England.—An immature female of *Heteropygia bairdi* (Coues) was shot by Mr. Michael J. Nicoll, on the shingle to the west of Rye Harbor, on the 11th of November, 1900. The bird was seen in the flesh by the present writer on the day following, and upon examination it soon became obvious that it was a stranger. Upon being submitted to Mr. Ernst Hartet, the accomplished ornithologist of Tring Museum, it was pronounced to belong to the above species. Baird's Sandpiper is not known to have previously occurred in the British Islands. The specimen was exhibited by Mr. Hartet at a meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club, on 21st Nov., 1900. (Bull. B. O. C., Vol. XI., p. 27).

It may be added that Mr. Nicoll's curiosity was aroused by the strange cry and flight of the bird. He states that when approached it flew some distance, and then, after rising, it suddenly dropped to the ground.—W. RUSKIN BUTTERFIELD, 4, *Stanhope Place, St. Leonard's-on-Sea, England.*

Ruffed Grouse in Snow.—From records in the snow I have come to the possibly trite conclusion that the Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*),

when not scared from the ground, will often deliberately clamber to some stump, or other eminence, in order to get good wing-space below its body for the first stroke in flight. The awkwardness of a leap from the level I found beautifully illustrated upon a flat piece of fresh soft snow some three inches in depth. Here, at the bird's spring, its entire form from tip of tail just to the swell of the throat, and from tip to tip of both wings, had pressed a mould some inch or two deep. This mould measured eighteen inches long and twenty inches in spread. Even the primaries of both wings were perfectly distinct, struck hard and clean. At a distance of eleven inches in front of this wing-beat the primaries had again struck into the snow, an inch in depth, as the wings met below the bird's body on the second stroke. The tips of these marks at their deepest were, I think, about four inches apart, showing that the bird normally needs an air-space below the body of almost the wing's full length. On firm ground the legs might push to this height; but on soft snow this manner of departure could hardly have been premeditated. These observations were made at Beverly Farms, Mass.—REGINALD C. ROBBINS, *Boston, Mass.*

The Passenger Pigeon.—Since the year 1871 I had not seen a Wild Pigeon until 1896, when, near the Bay of Quinte, I saw a pair. The following year in the same vicinity, I saw from four to six birds on several occasions and during the next two years I saw about the same number. The past season I had not the opportunity of observation.

In 1898 I wrote in 'The Globe,' the leading daily paper of Canada, asking any one who had seen Wild Pigeons, during recent years, to make it known. This elicited many replies through 'The Globe' and by personal letters.

There was a general agreement as to a total disappearance about 1870, continuing until 1895. A few stated they had seen an occasional bird earlier. The reports were from all parts of Ontario and Manitoba. Mr. D. C. Black, Appin, Ont., writes: "I saw nine in a wheat field near the village of Glencoe, and they are the first I have seen in twenty-five years. They did put me in mind of the olden times. When I was a boy I used to spend a great deal of my time trying to strike them with sticks. They have often taken half a day, crossing over our farm, flying very low, as they seemed to be very tired. . . . To see a few of them is to me as seeing a dear old friend."

I think we may fairly conclude that the Wild Pigeon abruptly became very rare about 1870 (it is probable there was a diminution during the previous decade), and that there has been an increase in their number in recent years.

I am not aware of any satisfactory explanation of the phenomena. It is not improbable, some epidemic disease, spreading more rapidly on account of the immense number of individuals, nearly exterminated the