

I also wish to record the capture of a Black Vulture at Black Point, East Lyme, on July 6, 1901, by Mr. Robert Payne. The bird was seen to alight in a pig-pen and feed with the pigs. It was secured and is now in my mounted collection of birds. No others were seen.—JAMES H. HILL, *New London, Conn.*

Ontario Bird Notes. — A Dovekie (*Alle alle*) was shot Nov. 18, 1901, by H. Macdonald, a fisherman, two miles out in the lake from Toronto, Ontario. Mr. John Maughn, a taxidermist, now has it in his possession. I was present when he opened the stomach, which was empty except for a few small fish bones. It was a female and evidently a young bird, as there was no white on the secondaries and the back was slaty instead of a black.

A pair of Little Blue Herons (*Ardea cærulea*) was taken by J. W. Anderson at Aylmer, Ont., a small inland town about nine miles north of Lake Erie, August 15, 1901. Two more were shot within a few miles of this place some time ago; all four were in the white plumage, with the primaries tipped with slate color.

A Canada Jay (*Perisoreus canadensis*) was also taken by J. W. Anderson, at Aylmer on Nov. 9, 1901.

A specimen of the Pine Grosbeak (*Pinicola enucleator*) was taken at Whitby, Ont., Nov. 18, 1901, from a number that had been in that vicinity for some time, and was sent to me by a friend.—J. H. AMES, *Toronto, Ontario.*

Solution of the 'Ornithological Mystery.'—I was much pleased to read Mr. Brewster's article, 'An Ornithological Mystery,' in the October number of 'The Auk,' as I feel certain I can help to solve it, as I myself had a bird which answers exactly to the description of the Yellow Rail (*Porzana noveboracensis*).

On Sept. 13, 1900, while in Mr. Hope's bird store, Queen St., Toronto, he told me he had a live rail for me, and when I saw it I was delighted to find it was a Yellow Rail, which had been taken by a man on the Humber River (particulars unknown). I had a cage made for him, 2½ by 1½ feet, with a metal bottom, in which I kept sand and about half an inch of water, with some aquatic plants, which I thought would be suitable for my new friend.

The little fellow became very tame, and I let him out occasionally, but he made no attempt at flying. Mr. Brewster speaks of 'the Mystery' as the 'Kicker,' while the female portion of my household christened my bird 'the Scold.' I kept the cage on the kitchen floor and he would invariably scold the first person who went into the room in the morning, and if any of their skirts brushed up against the cage he would be sure to scold them with his familiar call *kik-kik-kik-kik-queah*. If we went into the room at night and lighted the gas and surprised him he would use the longer call, *kik-kik-kik-kik-kik-kik-kik-kik-ki-queah*; and on two occasions, when he was at ease he uttered a note exactly like the Indigo Bunting's *chip*.

I fed him on boiled eggs and prepared mockingbird food, and a few meal worms.

One evening about the last week in December, 1900, while I was watching him bathe, evening being his favorite time for bathing, the poor little fellow's head dropped over the side of the bath, and after a few convulsive twitches he was dead. I had not time to make him into a skin, so sent him to a taxidermist, who unfortunately did not take the sex. — J. H. AMES, *Toronto, Ontario.*

Clark on the Classification of Birds. — Mr. Clark's most able and interesting article on the classification of birds, in 'The Auk' for October (XVIII, pp. 370-381) while showing the great value of pterylography, is one more example of the danger of attempting to base a system of classification on one character. Also it is a warning not to use external characters for the definition of great groups, but rather to rest them on the firmer foundation of characters afforded by the skeleton. This remark is naturally aimed at the combination of Tinamous and fowls to form one of the "old, worn-out 'orders'" complained of by the author at the commencement of his paper.

Mr. Clark assumes that changes of habit are *soon* (italics mine) followed by changes of structure, and although nothing is brought forward to sustain this statement, it may be freely admitted that many features of a bird's skeleton are at least adaptive, as in all other vertebrates, and that one of the stumbling blocks in the path of "the avian taxonomist" is the extent to which morphological structure may be obscured by adaptation. Nevertheless, this modification does not extend to the more important features, and particular objection must be made to the assertion that the skull is specially liable to adaptive changes. For while the external shape may be influenced the fundamental structure of the skull is unchanged, and although a passerine bird, for example, may have the slender bill of a honey creeper or the wide and short beak of a swallow, the skull is built on the same plan. Again, no feature is more characteristic of the Passeres than the structure of the hypotarsus, and while pterylosis may unite "Passeres and Picarians," the upper end of the tarsus shows at a glance whether or not, from Wren to Raven, a bird is a member of the upper 6000 of avian society. That the so-called picarian birds seem to, and do, form a heterogeneous assemblage is believed by many ornithologists to be due to the fact that they represent what may be called Nature's attempts to construct a passerine bird, being so many stages in the line of evolution, on the one hand reaching towards the higher type of birds, on the other retaining traces of their ancestry and of their affinity to other forms, while over all is the mantle of specialization along certain lines.

But if Mr. Clark thinks that modifications of the skeleton are adaptive and due to mechanical causes, what does he think of the main features of the pterylosis? If these be not due to adaptation, then there is no such