

SICALIS.

The carcass of this finch has been carefully compared with one of our American Goldfinch (*Astragalinus tristis*) without revealing any differences whatever in the pterylosis. The primary formula is 87 (or 78) 9654321 and the tail is a trifle less emarginate than in the goldfinch. The nostril is exposed and nearly circular. Nothing in the internal anatomy is noticeably different from what is found in *Astragalinus*. The tongue is possibly a trifle less fleshy. The tomia are markedly deflexed, a notable difference from the nearly straight tomia of the goldfinch. On the roof of the mouth in *Sicalis*, at the posterior end of the upper mandible is a conspicuous tubercle, back of which on each side is a minute pit. This tubercle may be seen in dry skins, as well as in alcoholic specimens, if the bill is opened. There is nothing like it in *Astragalinus*. It is also quite lacking in *Serinus*, an interesting confirmation of Mr. Ridgway's view that that genus is not a close ally of *Sicalis*. Perhaps it may be proper to add that my observations on the nostrils and the tomia of *Sicalis* and *Serinus* entirely confirm Mr. Ridgway's statements regarding those genera (*Birds of North and Middle America*, Vol. I, p. 522).

EARLY RECORDS OF THE WILD TURKEY. II.

BY ALBERT HAZEN WRIGHT.

THE HUNTING AND TRAPPING OF THE WILD TURKEY.

The hunting and trapping of this wary bird has furnished the literature of out-of-door magazines many an interesting column in the last forty years, a period following the range (250 years) of the subsequent notes. These represent most of the present-day methods of capture and cover a wide stretch of country as well as range of time. Of the general wariness of the species (Michaux, l. c., pp. 216, 217) writes as follows: "The wild turkies, which begin

to be very scarce in the southern states, are plentiful in those to the westward. In the most uninhabited parts they are so tame as to be easily killed with a pistol-shot. In the east, on the contrary, and particularly in the neighbourhood of the sea-ports, they cannot be approached without difficulty: they are not alarmed by a noise, but they have a very quick sight, and as soon as they discover the hunter, fly away with such rapidity, that it takes a dog several minutes to come up with them; and when they see themselves on the point of being caught, they escape by taking to flight. The wild turkies generally remain in the swamps, and by the sides of rivers and creeks, and only come out in the morning and evening. They perch on the tops of the highest trees, where, notwithstanding their bulk, it is not always easy to see them. When they have not been frightened, they return to the same trees for several weeks in succession." And, of the turkey on the southwestern prairies or plains near the Upper Red River, Long says,¹ "We daily saw — turkies; but these animals had acquired all the vigilance which results from the habit of being often hunted, and the entire want of thick forests, and even of solitary trees or inequalities of the surface to cover the approach of the hunter, rendered abortive most of our attempts to take them."

The aborigines have several methods of capture. According to T. Flint (l. c., p. 73) "The Indians and western sportsmen, learn a way to hunt them by imitating the cry of their young." Several other devices or practices of the Indians will appear in the following excerpts. In 1627, Isaac De Rasieries writes of the turkey in New Netherlands as follows:² "There are also very large turkeys living wild; they have very long legs, and can run extraordinarily fast so that we generally take savages with us when we go to hunt them; for even when one has deprived them of the power of flying, they yet run so fast that we cannot catch them unless their legs are hit also."

In writing of Capt. Brant in the Niagara region, P. Campbell remarks, that ³ "they rode on through the woods, and at last fell in

¹ James, Edwin. *Long's Expedition to the Rocky Mountains* — Phila., 1823, 2 vols. Vol. II, p. 96.

² N. Y. Hist. Soc. Colls. New Ser. Vol. II, p. 354.

³ Campbell, P. *Travels in the Interior Inhabited Parts of North America in the Years 1791 and 1792*. Edinburgh, 1793. pp. 202, 203.

with a large flock of Turkeys, and galloped after them as hard as they could, until they obliged the Turkeys to take wing and get upon trees, when the party alighted off their horses, and shot seventeen fine Turkeys, with which they returned to camp. They all shot with rifles. . . . He (Lieut. Turner) told me when he was one day permitted to go along with them to the woods on a shooting party; that how soon they fell in with Turkeys, the Indians pursued on foot as fast as they could run, bawling and hallowing all the time to frighten the birds, and when they had thus got them upon trees, that they shot many of them. Several other persons told me that this was the surest way to get them. They are so tame or stupid when they are in the trees, as to stand perhaps till the last of them be killed; whereas, on the ground, they are so quick sighted and fleet, that in an instant they are out of sight. An old Turkey Cock can outrun any man on the ground. Another method practiced, is that of watching them on the ground until they get up to roost in the trees in the evening, when the sportsmen may shoot on until the last in the flock be killed."

In 1824, John Hunter in the 'Memoirs of a Captivity among the Indians of North America,' gives us the following manner of hunting: ¹ "The turkey is not valued, though when fat, the Indians frequently take them alive in the following manner. Having prepared from the skin an apt resemblance of the living bird, they follow the turkey trails or haunts, till they discover a flock, when they secrete themselves behind a log, in such a manner as to elude discovery: partially display their decoy; and imitate the gobbling noise of the cock. This management generally succeeds to draw off first one and then another from their companions, which from their social and unsuspecting habits, thus successively place themselves literally in the hands of the hunters, who quickly despatch them, and await for the arrival for more. This species of hunting, with fishing, is more practised by the boys than the older Indians, who seldom, in fact, undertake them, unless closely pressed by hunger."

The Indians also used to employ a blow gun. McKinney when

¹ Hunter, John. *Memoirs* —. Third edit. with additions. London, 1824, pp. 282, 383.

on the Tombigbee River describes its operation thus:¹ "With the end in which the arrow is lodged in their mouths, a sight is drawn upon the object to be shot at; when with a sudden blow into the reed, the arrow is darted out the other end, and with a force sufficient to kill at twenty or thirty feet birds — and often wild turkeys." Concerning this same practice, Timberlake, 1762, when in Cherokee country, writes:² "There are . . . turkeys . . . pursued only by the children, who, at eight or ten years old, are very expert at killing with a sar-bacan, or hollow cane through which they blow a small dart, whose weakness obliges them to shoot at the eye of the larger sort of prey, which they seldom miss."

Thirty years after De Rasieries, Adrian Van der Donck in a 'Description of Netherlands, 1656' finds that³ "Sometimes the turkeys are caught with dogs in the snow; but the greatest number are shot at night from the trees. The turkeys sleep in trees and frequently in large flocks together. They also usually sleep in the same place every night. When a sleeping place is discovered, then two or three gunners go to the place together at night, when they shoot the fowls, and in such cases frequently bring in a dozen or more. The Indians take many in snares, when the weather changes in winter. Then they lay bulbous roots, which the turkeys are fond of, in the small rills and streams of water, which the birds take up, when they are ensnared and held until the artful Indian takes the turkey as his prize."

The settlers and foreign sportsmen in general try all the Indian methods and invent others of their own. Latrobe, when at Little Rock, Arkansas, tries to imitate the turkeys as do the Indians. He says,⁴ "Yet I plead guilty to having sometimes tried to coax the turkeys in rather an extraordinary way. . . . The practical hunter will induce them to approach him as he steals through the grass, by skilful imitation of their gobble and piping. But often, as buried in the thick cane brake, and watching one of those little openings, where the birds sun themselves, I heard the tread, rustle,

¹ McKinney, Thos. L. *Memoirs, Official and Personal; etc.* 2 vols. N. Y. 1846, Vol. I, p. 163.

² *The Memoirs of Lieut. H. Timberlake*— London, 1765, p. 45.

³ N. Y. Hist. Soc. Colls. New Ser. Vol. I, 1841, p. 172.

⁴ Latrobe, C. J. *The Rambler in North America 1832-1833.* 2 vols. New York, 1835, Vol. I, p. 205.

and voices of the turkeys around me, and have attempted to allure them to me by an imitation of their notes. I never succeeded in a single instance. I set up, for example, a weak, amorous, sentimental piping like the female, it was in vain! no broad backed, round-tailed, burly turkey-cock made his appearance. I gobbled in the most seducing fashion, throwing as much devotion into my tones as I could contrive; I essayed to compass a thousand blandishments into a few guttural sounds that were permissible, but these, far from eliciting any sympathetic response, seemed to put the whole gang to instant though cautious flight; for I invariably observed that very briefly, after an attempt of the latter kind, every sound became hushed, but the beating of my own impatient and disappointed heart. It was evident that there was no mistaking me for a turkey, and all the birds that I ever brought to the mess, were the fruits of a less guileful, more straight-forward and summary mode of proceeding."

Tibbits, in 1874, in 'Reminiscences of Early Days in Michigan' gives a variation of the turkey calling method.¹ "The wild turkey was very common, and vast flocks of several hundred were frequently to be met with. The usual method of hunting them, was for two or three persons to proceed cautiously through the woods till they came upon a flock, then suddenly fire at random amongst them, the object being to scatter them in all directions. When thus scattered they will invariably return to the same spot to get together again, the old ones coming first to call their young together. The hunters, hid in some secluded place with their 'turkey calls' ready for use, would wait patiently for the return of the old birds. These turkey-calls consist of the hollow bone of the turkey's wing, and, in the mouth of an experienced hunter can be made to exactly imitate the piping sound of the mother bird when calling her brood together. Soon the maternal notes of the old birds are heard, and the hunters respond with their 'calls,' luring them on to certain destruction. After the old birds are killed, the young ones fall an easy prey to the unerring aim of the skilful marksman. The flesh of the turkey is esteemed a great luxury, and one of the most delicious meals I think I ever ate was made from steak

¹ Mich. Pioneer and Hist. Soc. Colls. Vol. I, 1874-76. Wild Animals of Wayne County, Michigan. By J. S. Tibbits, p. 404.

cut from the breast of a young turkey, fried in butter, and partaken after a hard day's hunt, in which a companion and myself killed seven large fine birds."

In 1777 near Pamlico Sound, Elkanah Watson gives ¹ "chase to a wild turkey, that maintained his equal right to the road, like a true North Carolina Republican; and, in spite of our efforts, he stretched away upon his long legs, far beyond our reach." The Hon. C. A. Murray holds to a somewhat different opinion. In the neighborhood of Kansas River, when he is ² "crossing a wooded ravine a flock of turkeys, containing I think fifty or sixty, rose, and flew to a neighbouring thicket; as they were on the wing I fired a ball at random among them; it broke two or three feathers, but killed none. When my companions arrived, I halted them for half an hour, and went with the young American lad in pursuit of them; but they had beat us completely in the thicket, and we saw nothing more of them. Had we got them out on the open prairie we should have had excellent sport. A wild turkey runs with exceeding swiftness, but he cannot keep it up long, and his wings are not proportioned to the great weight of his body, so as to enable him to fly far. I have been told, that on a fair plain without trees, an active Indian or white man, could run one down in little more than an hour." The same gentleman recounts a hand-to-hand encounter he has with a wild turkey at Leesburgh, Va. "I was crossing a wooded ravine, when a large gobbler (so is the full-grown wild turkey-cock called here) started from the brushwood; my gun was only loaded with very small partridge-shot, but I discharged both barrels after the flying enemy, accidentally broke his wing; he came to the ground, and began to run like an ostrich. The little spaniel pursued in gallant style; but when he came up, was too small to hurt or hold his antagonist. I threw down my rifle and joined in the pursuit; at length I got hold of the turkey's leg; the grass was slippery with ice, and in his desperate struggle to escape he pulled me over on the ground, then he scratched my hands with his claws, and nearly blinded me by flapping his great wings

¹ Watson, W. C. *Men and Times of the Revolution: or Memoirs of Elkanah Watson.* New York, 1857. 2nd edition. p. 46.

² Murray, Hon. C. A. *Travels in North America during the years 1834, 1835 and 1836.* 2 vols. N. Y. 1839. Vol. II, p. 48, I, p. 88.

over my face and eyes; at last I contrived to seize his neck, and soon put an end to the contest. As he was too heavy a burthen for my little companion, I strung him across my back, and shouldering my rifle, returned in triumph to Leesburgh. During my walk homeward I felt no disposition to complain of the cold; for independent of my accoutrements, the turkey's weight proved, on my arrival, to be twenty-eight pounds."

Flint suggests another method for Kentucky in Boone's day. He holds that ¹ "A man stationed near one of these paths (buffalo or bear paths) could kill game enough, with turkeys — in an hour, to supply the wants of a month. In Virginia Bruce suggests a method somewhat akin to that of Tibbits. He writes ² "Of the two varieties of game (partridge and turkey), it is probable that the pursuit of the wild turkey afforded the Virginians much exertion as well as wariness to come up with it and kill it. Blinds of pine or oak boughs were erected at different eligible spots in the woods, and here, after scattering the flocks with trained dogs, the hunters would hide themselves, and by skilful use of the yelp, soon call up the confused and unsuspecting birds within range of the guns."

In the country of the Chickasaws (1724), according to Du Pratz, a dog is necessary to hunt them.³ "The second day I had a turkey-hen brought to regale me. The discoverer who killed it, told me, there are a great many in the same place, but that he could do nothing without a dog. I have often heard of a turkey-chace, but never had an opportunity of being at one. On coming to the spot, we soon discovered the hens, which ran off with such speed, that the swiftest Indian would lose his labour in attempting to outrun them. My dog soon came up with them, which made them take to their wings, and perch on the next trees; as long as they are not pursued in this manner, they only run, and are soon out of sight. I came near the place of retreat, killed the largest, a second and my discoverer a third. We might have killed the whole flock; for while they see any men, they never quit the tree they have once perched on. Shooting scares them not, as they only look at the bird that

¹ Flint, T. 1832, Vol. I, p. 348.

² Bruce, P. A. *The Social Life of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century.* Richmond, Va. 1907, p. 212.

³ Du Pratz, M. Le Page. *The History of Louisiana.* Paris 1758, London edit. 1774, pp. 134, 135.

drops, and set up a timorous cry, as he falls." In Canada (1844) Godley reports that ¹ "Wild turkeys are tracked in the snow, and stalked like deer with rifles; they show excellent sport, but are very scarce in our provinces." When along the Alleghany River, Pa. (1807), Christian Schultz relies on an air gun.² "It frequently happens that after shooting one from a tree, you will find it busted by falling on the ground; they are remarkably tame, and if alarmed, generally take to a tree, especially if disturbed by a dog. I found my air gun of great use in shooting this game, for if there were five or six of them in one tree, I was always sure of bringing them all down," and at Cedar Bluffs on the Mississippi, he praises this weapon as follows: "my air gun which had been charged a few hours before for the purpose of shooting at a flock of wild turkeys, was worth a dozen common guns at a moderate distance."

Quite frequently we find the wild turkey is hunted on horseback. Anburey, on a journey to Richmond, Va., overtakes ³ "a flock of wild turkeys; a couple of spaniels we had with us pursued them, and it is incredible how swift they run, as neither of us, though we galloped our horses, could overtake them, although they run near two hundred yards before they took flight; they appeared considerably larger than ours, and I am told, sometimes weigh thirty or forty pounds each." In the southwestern country 1849, Marcy reports one chase by horses in this manner:⁴ A hunter "discovered a turkey upon the prairie, and putting spurs to his horse started after him at full speed. I thought this a novel method of hunting wild turkeys, and looked on the chase with a good deal of interest, particularly as I knew that the quality of our supper depended upon the result. The turkey was about a half a mile ahead at the start, and made good running for a short time, but soon found it necessary to resort to flight. The hunter followed on till the turkey alighted

¹ Godley, John Robert. *Letters from America*. 2 vols. London, 1844. Vol. I., p. 247.

² Schultz, Christian. *Travels on an Inland Voyage through the States of New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee, etc.* N. Y. 2 vols. Vol. I. p. 122, 123; II, p. 4.

³ Anburey, Thomas. *Travels through the Interior Parts of America in a Series of Letters*. 2 vols. London, 1789. Vol. II, p. 342.

⁴ Report of Capt. R. B. Marcy's Route from Fort Smith to Santa Fe. 31st Congress, 1st Session, U. S. Senate, Ex. Doc. No. 64. July 24, 1850. Washington, D. C. p. 176.

and ran into a timbered ravine; he still followed out of sight with his horse, but soon appeared again with a stick driving the exhausted bird before him. I expressed much surprise at the facility with which he run down and caught the turkey; but he informed me that they seldom ever fly more than twice before they become exhausted and are easily taken."

One of the most profitable methods is the so called trap or pen, more generally used in Virginia than in any other region. Bruce (l. c., p. 213) in speaking of Virginia in the 17th century writes that "among the ingenious devices employed for its capture was the large trap built in the midst of the forest; lured by a long train of grains of corn to the hole in the ground which led into the trap, where there was piled up a quantity of the same grains, the turkey entered unhesitatingly, and once in, was too stupid to find its way out of the same hole again." Beverley informs us¹ "There are many pretty Devices besides the Gun, to take wild Turkeys; and among others, a Friend of mine invented a great Trap; wherein he at times caught many Turkeys, and particularly seventeen at one time; but he could not continue it so, as to let others in, after he had entrapped the first Flock, until they were taken out." Anburey (l. c. Vol. II, pp. 340, 343) notes this same practice in Virginia. "Just before we came to Goochland Courthouse, we saw the manner by which the inhabitants catch them: they make a long fence of about twelve feet square, securing the top with heavy logs, but before they covered it over dig a passage from the center, to the outside of the fence, which is covered over so as to admit light, and round about the entrance, and through this passage they strew Indian corn, as well as a quantity for them to feed on when in the trap, the birds seeing the corn in the inside, keep walking around to gather it, till they meet that which is laid to conduct them into the passage, which having consumed, they keep eating on till they get into the trap, and these foolish birds, when they wish to get out, instead of returning the way they came in, keep continually flying up, by which means one or two out of the flock, in the morning are found dead, and they frequently catch a flock of ten or a dozen at a time in this manner." In 1819, Warden (Vol. II, p. 178) practically repeats the above for Virginia.

¹ Beverley, Robert. *The History of Virginia.* London, 2 edit. 1722, p. 252.

Of Ohio in 1814 and 1815, Walker writes¹ "Wild Turkeys are very plenty. I have often set a square pen made of rails, then scattered a little corn about it and into it, and caught eight or ten fine ones at a time. The pen being covered at the top the turkeys could not fly out, and they never thought of ducking their heads to get out by the same passage they came in." In Michigan, about this same period, the pen has this description: (Tibbits, J. S., l. c., p. 404) "The wild turkey is sometimes caught in pens made of poles, some five or six feet in height and covered over the top to prevent their escape. A covered passageway is made under the pen large enough for the turkeys to crawl through. Corn or other grain is scattered in the passageway inside the pen. The unsuspecting birds, seeing the grain, commence picking it up, and thus one after another crawl through the hole into the pen. 'Once in, forever in,' for they never think of putting their heads down to crawl out again."

When at the Mammoth Cave, Blane, (l. c. p. 277) an English gentleman finds, "The manner in which great numbers of wild turkeys are caught is very simple and curious. A Pen is made by placing rough hewn rails one above another, so as to form a vacant space, about six or eight feet long and as many broad, which is closed at the top by heavy rails laid across. A small trench is then dug for a yard or two on the outside and continued under the lowest rail into the interior. In this trench some Indian corn is strewed, and the turkeys, while employed in picking it up, advance with their head downwards into the Pen. As soon as they find themselves in the enclosure, these stupid birds never think of stooping down, or they could walk out as easily as they walked in; but instead of this they try to force a way out at the top and sides, and continue jumping about in great alarm, till some one in the course of the day visits the Pen and secures them. I have known as many as seven or eight caught within four and twenty hours in a single Pen."

In Canada the same method used to be in vogue. Smith finds² a "common mode of capturing them is by trapping. This is effected by erecting a large pen or hut of fence rails, leaving the lower rail of one side a sufficient height from the ground to allow of

¹ Walker, Chas. N. *History of Athens, O.* Cincinnati. 1869, p. 431.

² Smith, W. H. *Canada; Past, Present and Future*, etc. 2 vols. Toronto. 1851, Vol. II, p. 405.

the Turkey creeping under it. A long train of barley, corn, or some other grain is then laid on the ground, leading into the trap; the Turkeys gather up the grain till they arrive at the trap, when they follow the bait and creep under the rail; as soon as they discover the predicament they are in they become so alarmed that they appear at once to lose all instinct; there is nothing to prevent them leaving the trap the way they came in, but they seem to not be aware of that, and remain stupidly staring about them till they are captured. In consequence of this known stupidity of the Turkey, trapping is prohibited in Canada, as tending to exterminate the breed, the Turkey usually wandering in flocks or families, and the whole flock being thus generally taken at once; whereas, if they are *shot*, the chances are that some one of each brood will escape."

SOME WINTER BIRDS OF OKLAHOMA.

BY WELLS W. COOKE.

LESS has been published about the birds of Oklahoma than about those of any other state in the Union. It seems advisable therefore that a record should be made of the notes made during a seven months' residence there the winter of 1883-4. The center of observations was the town of Caddo, on the M. K. and T. Ry., twenty miles north of Denison, Texas. The country at that time — the Choctaw Nation — was devoted principally to the grazing of beef cattle. Right in the town of Caddo there were a few small cotton and corn fields, but a half mile in any direction brought one to the open range, never as yet overstocked, and scarcely changed from its condition before it was trod by the white man's foot. Much the same could be said about the timber. There were no forests anywhere and no evergreens. The country as a whole was well grassed prairie, but every little 'branch' was fringed with brush, and when enough of these had united to make a permanently flowing stream its banks were lined with a thin fringe of trees, which