

Aeronautes saxatalis (Woodhouse).—HARRY C. OBERHOLSER, *Washington, D. C.*

A New Name for *Phaeochroa* Gould.—The name of the genus of Trochilidae now known as *Phaeochroa* Gould (Introd. Troch., 1861, p. 54; type, *Trochilus cwierii* De Lattre and Bourcier) proves to be preoccupied by *Phaeochrous* Laporte de Castelnau (Hist. Nat. Ins., II, 1840, p. 108), a genus of Coleoptera. As it seems to be generically separable from *Aphantochroa* Gould and appears to possess no synonym, we propose to call it *Bombornis* (βόμβος bombus; ἄρνις avis) nom. nov., with *Trochilus cwierii* De Lattre and Bourcier as type. The following species are referable to this genus:

Bombornis cwierii cwierii (De Lattre and Bourcier).

Bombornis cwierii saturator (Hartert).

Bombornis roberti (Salvin).—HARRY C. OBERHOLSER, *Washington, D. C.*

Great Crested Flycatcher in Massachusetts in Winter.—On December 8, 1919, at Nahant Beach, Mass., I found a Great Crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*). The bird was in apparently good condition and quite tame. When alarmed at my close approach it seemed reluctant to leave the immediate vicinity and allowed me to observe it at close range. On the beach, where I first flushed it, was a mass of kelp, washed up by the tide, and covered with hundreds of black insects the size of a common fly. When I walked by, the insects rose in clouds covering my clothes. Upon these insects the bird was feeding, catching them from its perch on the rocks or from a wooden fence that runs along a walk near the beach. It would be interesting to know whether or not it will survive the winter.—CHARLES B. FLOYD, *Auburndale, Mass.*

The Song of the Boat-tailed Grackle.—During a six weeks' trip through central and eastern Florida in January and February, 1917, the writer had numerous opportunities to improve acquaintance with this distinctive grackle (*Megaquiscalus major major*). Here its range is not strictly maritime (as it appears to be elsewhere along the Atlantic Coast from Georgia to Maryland), for it makes its home also about the many bodies of fresh water throughout the interior of the state as far north as the vicinity of Gainesville. It is known everywhere to Florida people as the 'Jackdaw,' a name probably adopted and handed down by the early settlers because they saw in this species some slight similarity to the Old-World Jackdaw (*Colæus monedula*), a small representative of the family Corvidae. The females differ so much in size and color from the resplendent males that they have gained, here and there, a separate appellation; in the Kissimmee region, for instance, they are said to be called 'Cowbirds.'

In view of the lack of any intensive study of the Boattail's life history, it is perhaps not surprising that a certain deceptive feature of its song has failed to be generally understood.

The species was in full voice as early in the season as January 20, at Mayport. Here some males were perching in a live-oak and uttering their not unpleasing notes, which suggested somewhat a European Starling's medley. On Merritt's Island, where I found small numbers of these birds on February 19, I began to pay close attention to the male's musical performance, and more particularly to that part of it which Chapman describes as "a singular rolling call, which bears a close resemblance to the sound produced by a Coot in pattering over the water."¹ A male, which was sitting on a stake in the marsh and indulging persistently in its curious song, furnished a convenient subject for observation. The song seems to vary in length with individuals, but one performance that I heard to particular advantage (this was at Sebastian, a few days later) might be rendered as follows: *kip, kip, kip, kip-kip-kip-kip-kip-kip-kip, chirrr, chirrr, chirrr, chirrr, chirrr, chirrr, pt-pt-pt-pt-pt-pt-pt-pt*. The first part consists of a succession of simple, short *kips*, the first few given more slowly than the rest; the second part, of rolling, guttural *chirrrings*; and the third part, of the sound described by Chapman. I noticed that when the bird reached the final part of its song, it vibrated or slightly fluttered its wings, so that their tips appeared to strike either together or against the upper side of the tail. At the same time the bill had the appearance of partly closing. I therefore concluded that the sound was not vocal, but wing-made; and a number of subsequent observations strongly confirmed me in this opinion.

It was not until my last morning in Florida (at Fernandina, February 27) that I was undeceived. I then had an excellent view of a bird that was walking over the muddy shore, and saw that its wing-tips did not touch during the final part of the song, though they vibrated a little. A little later another bird, perched on a telephone pole, did not appear to vibrate its wings at all during the song. I could plainly see the bill in a sort of rattling motion, however, and finally realized that it was the rapid striking together of the mandibles that produced the sound suggestive of that which a Coot makes in pattering over the water.

On my return from the field I was interested to find that the few published accounts of this feature of the song disagree as to the manner in which it is produced. Mr. Arthur T. Wayne writes that "the males . . . perch upon a limb of some tree and with their wings make a loud rolling sound. This peculiar noise is also made while the birds are flying."² Bradford Torrey, in his delightful 'Florida Sketch-book,' has given so apt an account of the Boattail and its music that it seems worth

¹ Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America, 1912, p. 368.

² Birds of South Carolina, 1910, pp. 112-113.

while to quote at length from this gifted observer and interpreter of bird ways:

"He opened his bill—*set it*, as it were, wide apart—and holding it thus, emitted four or five rather long and very loud grating, shriekish notes; then instantly shook his wings with an extraordinary flapping noise, and followed that with several highly curious and startling cries, the concluding one of which sometimes suggested the cackle of a robin. All this he repeated again and again with the utmost fervor. . . . The introduction of wing-made sounds in the middle of a vocal performance was of itself a stroke of something like genius. . . .

"That the sounds *were* wing-made I had no thought of questioning. . . . Two days afterward, nevertheless, I began to doubt. I heard a grackle 'sing' in the manner just described, wing-beats and all, while flying from one tree to another; and later still . . . I more than once saw them produce the sounds in question without any perceptible movement of the wings, and furthermore, their mandibles could be seen moving in time with the beats. . . .

"If the sounds are not produced by the wings, the question returns, of course, why the wings are shaken at just the right instant. . . . The reader may believe, if he will, that the bird is aware of the imitative quality of the notes, and amuses itself by heightening the delusion of the looker-on. My own more commonplace conjecture is that the sounds are produced by snappings and gratings of the big mandibles . . . and that the wing movements may be nothing but involuntary accompaniments of this almost convulsive action of the beak. But perhaps the sounds *are* wing-made, after all."¹

The first, second, and third parts of the song, as described by Torrey, correspond, respectively, to what I have considered the second, third, and first parts. In view, however, of the continuous nature of the Boattail's performance, almost any part of the song might be taken as the first.

Mr. Alexander Wetmore tells me that his observations on the species at Punta Gorda in early February, 1919, fully support the conclusion that the pattering sound is produced mechanically by the mandibles.—FRANCIS HARPER, *Biological Survey, Washington, D. C.*

Clark's Crow in Denver.—The undersigned saw, to his amazement, a pair of Clark's Crows (*Nucifraga columbiana*) flying over the city well within the residential district on December 7, 1919; the region of Denver had had, previous to this date, two spells of zero weather, and whether the extreme cold caused these unusual visitors to our city it is hard to determine. This is the first occasion that I have seen this crow so far away from the mountains of our neighborhood, and the first time in Denver.—W. H. BERGTOLD, *1121 Race St., Denver, Colo.*

¹ A Florida Sketch-book, 1894, pp. 108-110.