

subspecies *scolopaceus*. Both Dowitchers are rather rare migrants here, but I think the Long-billed is the commoner bird. The bird mentioned above is now in my collection.

Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus. YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD.—On April 24, I saw a flock of about fifty birds of this species in the rushes in Hyde Lake. More arrived later and to a large extent supplanted the Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*). These birds were at one time very abundant in the marshes and sloughes south of Chicago, but since the advent of the large factories and chemical plants, many of their best nesting grounds have been destroyed. At the present rate, the birds will be very rare in a few years.

Spizella pallida. CLAY-COLORED SPARROW.—On May 8, several friends and I noticed a small sparrow unlike anything else we had ever seen, at Wolf Lake. The bird was very tame, and allowed us to study it at very close range. Unfortunately I had no gun, but the brown on the sides of the head and the markings in general were so well defined and distinctive as to leave no room for doubt as to the bird's identity. This bird is an accidental straggler from the west, and has been taken in the Dunes by Mr. Stoddard.

Spiza americana. DICKCISSEL.—This bird breeds locally west of Chicago, but I have included it in this list because of the peculiar circumstances under which I saw it. On May 10, I was walking along Lake Park Ave., on my way to Jackson Park, at about five o'clock in the morning, when I noticed a flock of English Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) across the street, and although one of the birds impressed me as very light, I paid no heed and went on. Hardly had I gone twenty yards when the birds flew across the street and two of them lit on a small tree. Now to my great surprise, one commenced to sing. I immediately retraced my steps and saw that the bird which was singing was a male Dickcissel. It seems strange to meet this bird of the fields and meadows in the heart of the city.

Dendroica discolor. PRAIRIE WARBLER.—On May 6, I saw one male of this species. The Prairie Warbler is always regarded as a rare migrant, but I have seen several in the Park.—NATHAN F. LEOPOLD, JR., 4754 Greenwood Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Items Relative to Some Costa Rican Birds. **Catharista urubu braziliensis.**—Apropos the articles in recent numbers of 'The Auk,' bearing on the subject of the power of the various senses of the Black Vulture. I may be allowed to record an incident, concerning the Central American form of the species, that came under observation of the writer and his wife, while located near Juan Viñas, Costa Rica, in April, 1920. We occupied a house, which was of considerable pretensions, and in good repair but had not been occupied, other than temporarily, for several years. Soon after settling there, we noted a particular Vulture, that came almost daily to the garden, surrounding the house, where it was usually to be seen perched on a fence

post, or on the roof-ridge of the house itself. One of the windows of the kitchen was usually left open. On two or three occasions the Vulture alighted on this window-ledge. but seeing some one within, quickly departed. When we were away from the house it was our custom to close the window. However, one morning, we overlooked doing so. On this occasion we left a good fire burning in the cook-stove, on which was placed a stew-pan, with cover, containing a piece of meat and portions of several kinds of vegetables.

Returning from our tramp, we were surprised to find that our prospective dinner had entirely disappeared, even to the liquid; although the pan yet remained on the stove. The cover was on the floor nearby. The stove-top had not entirely cooled when we reached the house. All too reliable evidence as to the identity of the intruder was to be found in the droppings deposited on stove and floor.

After this experience, our precautions were more rigorous, yet this bird, on one occasion thereafter, got inside the room, but we were present and nothing happened.

Picolaptes affinis neglectus.—This is one of the commonest Tree-Creepers (*Dendrocolaptidae*) over the wooded uplands of Costa Rica. The individuals of the species that came under attention here were found on the south slope of the Volcano Irazu, at about 10,000 ft. altitude, while camping there during May, 1920. A pair of birds were seen on the 11th, both working up the trunk of a large tree that grew in a heavily wooded ravine. Owing to this latter fact, I was as near as twenty-five feet of their position, before I observed them. I recognized the species at once; also noting the abbreviated tail on both, a condition that seemed to much impede their progress in climbing. I secured the ♂ of this pair. Then it was that I observed that the rectices, except the middle pair that were replaced by fresh ones, very short and mostly in the sheath, had suffered severance, about one inch from their base, by some sharp instrument, and not by reason of wear, because the shafts all showed fresh cleavage, and no fraying. Moreover, this trimming was perfectly regular, and of the form of an inverted V. The operation therefore must have been performed with bill by the bird itself. The fact that this mutilation of the tail was seen in both birds, before I had shot, eliminated the possibility of that source for a solution; aside from the seeming impossibility of shot trimming the feathers, as has been described.

Gymnostinops montezumae.—While staying at Juan Viñas, I came across many nesting colonies of this Oropendola, and with the assistance of my wife and a native boy, a small colony of some thirty nests was inspected about April 1, 1920. These nests were hung on a medium-sized Guava tree that stood at least one hundred feet from any other tree. Three limbs were sawed off: one supported seven nests, one three, and one but two. During this operation most of the individuals of this colony gathered in the nearest available tree, and kept up a great clatter, until a hawk (*Leptodon uncinatus*) made an unsuccessful dash

into them. This both dispersed and quieted them. Although all these nests were completed, even to the abundant supply of fresh leaves, that new nests always contain, no eggs had been laid. So the nests still attached to their respective positions were left at the base of the nesting tree.

A week later we chanced to return to the spot. The colony contained about the original number of nests hung in the tree. On the ground were the limbs in the place we had deposited them. But the only traces of the nests that had been attached were some short strands so intricately woven about the leaves and their petioles that they defied unravelling.

Junco vulcani.—We were fortunate enough to meet with this snow-bird in considerable numbers during our visit to the Volcano Irazu. Our observations differed somewhat from those of previous observers inasmuch that we found them among the oak timber, as low as 10,000 ft. as well as above the timber line. What I wish to record is the difference in amount of plumage wear this species is subject to under varying degree of humidity, at the same relative attitude and within an area of a few square miles.

As is well known, the south slope of the Volcano Irazu, although on the Caribbean slope of the continental divide, lies in what is termed the "shadow of the Volcano," and is thus deprived almost entirely, from December to May, and to a considerable degree during the balance of the year, of the perennial moisture carrying clouds that blow in from the East and Northeast. About three miles to the east of the main crater of the Volcano is a pass, through which a road passes that leads to the Volcano Turrialba. As soon as this pass is reached, the rainfall and humidity greatly increase and it is noticeable that pastures and herbaceous vegetation generally do not dry up in the winter and spring months as they do south of Irazu. The demarcation line between the wet and dry zones is but a couple of hundred feet wide at the pass.

Such individuals of this Junco as were taken on the slope of Irazu were all in very worn plumage, that could not be matched by a single specimen that came under observation taken at the pass or to the eastward. For the most part these individuals from the humid zone were in comparatively fresh plumage, such as the species should wear at the beginning of the nesting season, and from examination of the sexual organs I judged that the breeding season was near. While I saw no young of the species during my stay (May 3 to 19, 1920) I did shoot a female on the 10th, within the dry zone, carrying a crane-fly (*Tipula*) in her bill; and another female was taken on the 6th, while I was making the trip to the crater that had her bill full of dried grass stems.—AUSTIN PAUL SMITH, Cartago, Costa Rica.

Observation of a Remarkable Night Migration.—A flock of birds, present in such numbers that they were continually passing across the field of the theodolite telescope, were noticed in the course of following