

Ptilology—a proposed name for the general study of the plumage of birds.

—In 1867, the Ray Society, of London, published in its 'Transactions' a translation of the first important treatise on feathers—the work of the German ornithologist, C. L. Nitzsch. It was entitled "Pterylography" and dealt primarily with the pterylae or feather tracts of birds, although it also included a brief but good description of the general structure of feathers.

Nitzsch's work has been followed by many other papers, which have dealt with the structure and color and the taxonomic characters of feathers, as well as numerous peculiar adaptations. Much of this research has been based on the examination of feather structures under the microscope and has been progressively more thorough, but the published literature on the subject is still discouragingly meager.

Men engaged in serious study in a virgin scientific field should logically have in common a name descriptive of that field, but this has not been true of those doing research work on feathers.

Nitzsch's name, 'pterylography,' applies to the study or description of the feather tracts, the pterylae; and another term, 'pterylogy,' deals with the study of the arrangement of the feather tracts. Neither term is sufficiently inclusive to describe the general study of the plumage of birds.

In my work with the former Bureau of Biological Survey, now the Fish and Wildlife Service, and subsequently, I have found a special need for a term descriptive of my restricted field, the comparative study of microscopic feather structure as it pertains to the identification of fragments from the stomachs of animals.

This need has become pressing, and I hereby propose two terms, which are descriptive of the general field and my special branch. These terms may be defined as follows:

pti-lol'o-gy (tī lōl ō jī), n. [*ptilon* down, a feather, a wing + *logy* science of.] *Zool.* The study of ptilosis, a term meaning the plumage of birds, irrespective of pterylosis.

mī-crop-ti-lol'o-gy (mī crōp tī lōl ō jī), n. [*mikros* small + *ptilon* + *logy*.] *Zool.* The study of feather structure not visible to the unaided eye.

The definitions of pterylography, pterylogy, pterylosis, and ptilosis, as they are given in Webster's dictionary, 2nd edition, unabridged, have been accepted as standard in the formulation of the two definitions given above.—FRANKLIN H. MAY, 210 Spruce Avenue, Takoma Park, Maryland.

Sinaloa Martin nesting in western Mexico.—In an article entitled 'Unusual Birds and Extensions of Ranges in Sonora, Sinaloa and Chihuahua, Mexico' (Condor, 50, No. 1: 23, Jan.-Feb., 1938), the author recorded the collecting at San Feliz, Chihuahua, of the first females of this rare martin, which had been known previously only from the topotypical series reported by Nelson (Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash., 12: 59, Mar. 24, 1898) from "Plomosas," Sinaloa, at a slightly lower altitude. There also are two specimens from La Laja, Jalisco, intermediate in their characters, but nearer *sinaloae*. The collector, Chester C. Lamb, had reason to believe that the San Feliz birds represented a nesting colony, and recorded in his journal: "Quite a colony are nesting in some hole in the sycamores." However, this was not factual evidence to prove the breeding, an assumption that has been gravely doubted by several authorities. There was good ground for the belief that this far western form, dependent for its validity on smaller size, entirely white under tail-coverts, and black tips to feathers of dorsal surface, according to the describer, represented an

accidental occurrence of true *dominicensis*, whose breeding range is confined to the Greater and Lesser Antilles.

An excellent new series of ten males and four females, secured by Mr. Lamb between June 9 and June 30 at a collecting station, "ten miles northwest of Santa Teresa, Nayarit, at 5500 feet altitude," has now solved the problem referred to by Hellmayr (Cat. Birds of the Americas, 13, pt. 8: 16, 1935). On June 9, Mr. Lamb secured a male, one of three "flying about a tall dead pine." On June 11, he secured another male and recorded in his journal: "I saw martins entering a hole in a large white oak thirty feet up." Others were collected on the 17th, 20th and 30th, including four females, and the two females taken on the 17th had eggs in the oviduct. Every one of the ten males had the sex organs fully enlarged. In conversation, Mr. Lamb stated emphatically: "There was unquestionably a colony of these martins nesting," and the fact that there were eggs in the oviducts of the females proves his statement. Apparently, he did not have proper climbing equipment to make the ascent to the holes. The general area consisted of high ridges covered with pines and "some white oaks," which indicate the Transition Zone. The topotypical series was secured at a somewhat lower altitude about 50 miles to the north and, since our previous series of six specimens was taken at San Feliz, Chihuahua, in the same main Sierra Madre de Occidental at an altitude of 7500 feet, there is no question but what this is a high altitude form.

The Sinaloa Martin is definitely a subspecies of *Progne dominicensis* and should be known as *Progne dominicensis sinaloae* (Nelson). It is unquestionably very close to *dominicensis*. However, I feel that it should be recognized on the basis of: (1) its smaller average size [the ten Santa Teresa males have an average wing length of 135.7 mm. (131.8-141.7) as compared with the average of twenty-two specimens of true *dominicensis* of 143.5 mm. (134.0-149.0) as given by Ridgway]; (2) the usually more expansive white areas of the under parts; and in the males, (3) the pure white under tail-coverts which, in none of my ten specimens, have any "dusky gray" in them, characteristic of many males of true *dominicensis*. Consideration also should be given to the enormous gap between the ranges of the two forms, since no specimen has been recorded from central and eastern Mexico, a stretch of country more than one thousand miles in width, *i. e.*, from La Laja in northern Jalisco to the east coast of Yucatan. Nor has either form been taken in the westernmost islands of the West Indies—Cuba or the smaller islands west of Jamaica. Lastly, the zonal and altitude preferences seem to be different in the two birds.—ROBERT T. MOORE, *Contribution of the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California.*

White-fronted Goose in Connecticut.—On November 5, 1943, Mr. Edward L. Mulliken of Saybrook, Connecticut, and party were duck hunting off Westbrook when three geese approached from the northwest, flying out from shore. Responding promptly to an imitation of the Canada Goose call, all were taken. They proved to be White-fronted Geese, *Anser albifrons*, and were so reported to the National Headquarters of Ducks Unlimited in New York. Mr. Ray E. Benson of that organization writes that, with the possible exception of an immature bird taken in 1941 off Sachem's Head by Joseph Dolin, but unfortunately not positively determined before disposal, these birds are believed to constitute the first of this species recorded from Connecticut.

Mr. Mulliken kindly sent them to the Peabody Museum for study, and a search through the files of "The Auk" confirmed Mr. Benson's belief. The records, however, show that specimens have been taken on the Atlantic coast as follows: Massachusetts, two in 1866, two in 1888, one in 1897, one in 1926; Long Island, one in 1846, 1849,