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## 100 Years Ago in The Auk



From "Bird nomenclature of the Chippewa Indians," by W. W. Cooke (1884 *Auk* 1: 242-250):

"During a three years' residence among the Chipewas at White Earth, Minn., I had many opportunities of learning the names which they give to birds, and some of their ideas regarding them. These Indians claim to have a name for each and every kind of bird inhabiting their country; as a fact, they have no specific name for fully one-half of those which yearly nest before their eyes, or pass by in migration. We may say in general that they give names to all winter residents, since at that time bird life is so scarce that each one is accurately noticed, while summer birds of much greater dissimilarity receive but one name.

Among summer residents, nearly all those that are hunted for food are named and described. Indeed, few white hunters, or ornithologists, can recognize the different species of Ducks as quickly or at as great a distance as many of these Indians. Of the other summer birds, most of the large species have names, but some of these, as, for example, those of the Hawks and Owls, are very loosely applied. They all seem to be familiar with the names, but not with the particular bird to which each belongs. This may be accounted for by the large number of stories about these birds which are told to the children, teaching them the names, but not the appearance of the birds. The small birds of summer seem to the Indian beneath his notice, and when asked the name, the answer not uncommonly is, "Why do you want to know its name? It isn't good to eat." They consider that when to a

small winged animal they have given the name 'bird,' they have done their whole duty."

[Cooke then provides over 100 examples, among which are the following:]

"Shrike . . . **Kitch'-i-win'-di-go-bi-ne'-sji**, big cannibal-bird."

"Song Sparrow . . . **Kos-kos-ko-ni'-chi**, making a scraping or whispering noise. This name is also indiscriminately applied to any small dull-colored bird, which is seen in the grass or on low shrubs. Probably thirty or more species would be included under this name."

"Bobolink . . . **Shi-ka'-go-bi-ne'-shi**. Chicago bird, that is, skunk bird, from the white stripe down the middle of the back."

"Yellow-headed Blackbird . . . **Bwan-ence'-as-sig'-gi-nak**, little Souix blackbird; because its home is in the west in the land of the Souix."

"Yellow-shafted Flicker . . . **Mo-ning'-gua-ne'**, bird with dirty colored wings."

"Bald Eagle . . . **Mi'-gi-zi** . . . When young, or gray, it is called *Ini'-ni'-zi*, man Eagle; when old and white, *Wa'-bi-jush-kwe'*, white woman."

"Loon . . . **Mang**, brave. This is almost the only word of one syllable in the Chippewa language. In English, to call a person a loon is not very complimentary, but the Indians use loon-hearted just as we do lion-hearted, to denote extreme bravery. In the fall, when the colors get dull, the name **A'-shi-mang** is given, meaning false Loon."