

The Undying Error.—No more typical example of the persistence of error could be selected than that furnished by the publication and subsequent citation of the alleged nesting of the Black Cloud Swift (*Cypseloides niger borealis*) at Seattle. An ardent amateur, Mr. Matt H. Gormley, a member of a now defunct organization then known as "The Young Naturalists", found a bulky nest containing five white eggs in a warehouse on the Seattle waterfront, and reported it, with due pomp and circumstantiality, as the nest of the long-sought Black Swift. Appearing as it did in the venerated columns of the *Auk* (vol. v, 1888, pp. 424-425), the report met with ready acceptance and was copied far and wide.

Of course those whose natures are tinged with a wholesome skepticism soon made out that the nest in question belonged, not to the dashing tyrant of the skies, but to the more prosaic Purple Martin (*Progne subis*). So far as its author was concerned the mistake, albeit somewhat jejune, was a not altogether unnatural one, because the Martin as a resident of Washington was then very little known. Mr. Gormley at length discovered his own error and was so bored by it, and by the chaffing to which it subjected him, that the subject became tabu among his friends; but so far as known to the writer, he never took the trouble to make a public correction.

Major Bendire correctly diagnosed the case, upon a visit to Seattle in May, 1894, and published his opinion in the authoritative "Life Histories" (vol. II, 1895, p. 177). Yet here we have it in Mrs. Bailey's "Handbook of Birds of the Western United States" (Second Edition, Revised, 1904, p. 229): "Nest.—On cliffs or about buildings. One described by M. H. Gormley on the cornice of a building made of straws, chips, and horsehair, lined with green leaves and paper. Eggs: 5, white." Davie admits the record to his "Nests and Eggs of North American Birds", 3rd and 4th editions, but throws it out of the final 5th edition. Coues avoids the trap, as also does Reed in "North American Birds' Eggs"; but *miserabile dictu!* we find this in Ridgway's masterpiece ("Birds of North and Middle America", Part v, p. 703), under the generic heading *Nephoecetes*: "Nidification.—Nest in recesses among rocks or about buildings, composed of straw, feathers, leaves, bits of paper, etc., loosely put together and not held together by salivary secretion"—the pitiful undying error of the Gormley tradition!

One even suspects that this ancient virus has poisoned so classical a fount as the Cambridge Natural History. In Volume IX, "Birds", by A. H. Evans, page 423, we find the following (abridged) paragraph: "In *Cypseloides* * * * *C. niger* of North America * * * *C. rutilus* and *C. brunneitorques*. The genus ranges to Peru and Brazil. The nest, placed in holes in houses and so forth, is made of straw, leaves and rubbish; the eggs are four or five". But Ridgway expressly says of *Cypseloides* (from which he has separated our Black Swift under the name *Nephoecetes*): "Nest of *C. brunneitorques* composed of moss, shallow and compact, placed in dark culverts, near water (probably in rocky banks or cliffs also." No; the animus of the Evans paragraph is Gormley (*op. cit. ad. nous.*). We shall never see the last of it!—WILLIAM LEON DAWSON, Santa Barbara, California.

Albino Anatids.—In the store of Mr. Wm. Hackmeier, a well-known taxidermist of San Francisco, there is on exhibition a mounted specimen of a female albino White-fronted Goose. The specimen was sent in by a market hunter who killed it near Colusa, Colusa County, California, February 26, 1911. The general color is creamy white shading to light buff on the scapulars and primaries. The scapulars are light buff edged with creamy white. Two conspicuous characters help in identifying this specimen as belonging to the species *Anser albifrons gambeli*. One is the white area at the base of the bill, which, although not contrasting with the cream color of the head, is yet easily distinguishable. The other is the presence of five dusky brown feathers on the breast which give it the characteristic "speckle-belly" appearance. The specimen is in worn plumage. Mr. Hackmeier reports the bill as being "flesh color" and the feet as "pink". Measurements: Folded wing 39 millimeters; bill along culmen 43; tarsus 70.

A female albino Mallard Duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*) was recently presented to the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology by Mr. George Thompson of Gridley, Butte County, California. The bird was shot by Mr. Thompson along with other ducks near Gridley on January 7, 1914. The entire plumage of the bird is white except for light brownish centers to some of the feathers of the breast, abdomen, and back of neck, and for brownish feathers on top of the head. According to Ridgway's *Color Standards* (1912), the bill is capucine-orange and the feet salmon-orange. Measurements are as follows: Total length 556 millimeters; folded wing 279; bill along culmen 53; tarsus 46.—H. C. BRYANT, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley.*