

## CHARLES ANDREW ALLEN

WITH ONE ILLUSTRATION

By JOSEPH MAILLIARD

The passing of a man whose name, as collector, was on the labels of many specimens of birds and small mammals from California deserves attention, especially as these were collected in the last quarter of the past century, when the Pacific coast was yet a comparatively new and far from systematically explored region. Although not known from association with, or membership in, any ornithological organization, his name will long be prominent as being permanently connected with one of the friendliest of our exquisite Pacific Coast Hummingbirds, the Allen Hummingbird (*Selasphorus alleni* Henshaw).

Having been well acquainted with Allen for nearly sixty years, much of the time in close association with him, I beg leave to set forth the following facts concerning his life and his connection with the ornithological history of California.

On August 21, 1841, Charles Andrew Allen was born at Milton, Massachusetts. From his own account, the first few years of his life were uneventful, but his connection with ornithological matters commenced early; for one day, when he was about eleven years old, as he was walking along Nantasket Beach, Cape Cod, accompanying one James A. Gatly, a Boston taxidermist, he presented to that gentleman a bird that he found on the beach. Mr. Gatly identified this bird as a Cory Shearwater (*Puffinus borealis* Cory), took it home and made a mounted specimen of it, much to the joy of the boy, for whom this was the starting point of his interest in birds. Noticing the interest of the child, to whom he was really attached, Mr. Gatly constituted himself instructor to the boy, in bird lore and taxidermy.

On leaving school Allen worked for four years at carpentry, but enlisted in the First Massachusetts regiment early in the civil war, in which he served for two years. I do not recall, however, any mention of his having been under fire. Later, for eight years all together, he worked in the Baker Chocolate Mills, at Lowell, Massachusetts, on holidays and after work hours in summer evenings collecting and mounting specimens. After that period he was employed for some four years, off and on, in the planing mill of a furniture factory, but the dust so affected his lungs that he would lay off from time to time and work with Gatly until he felt better again.

Somewhere here he spent three years as a fisherman on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, going to sea more to be familiar with the bird life there than for anything else.

Finally the dust in the planing mill so seriously affected his lungs that, early in 1873, he came to Los Angeles, California, staying there until June, collecting birds (and possibly small mammals), which he sent east to a man named Freeman. After an attack of whooping cough his health was so much worse that he almost concluded that he was tubercular; but in June of that year he made a visit to San Rafael, California, and stayed there for a few weeks, finally telling a friend that he was "going home [east] to die." His friend succeeded in laughing this idea out of his head, and soon after this Allen accepted a position as a sort of timber guard on the Miller Ranch, near Nicasio, Marin County, California, where he lived in a small cabin on the edge of the redwood forest. In 1870 he was married to Miss Abby F. Robie, of Dorchester, Massachusetts, and it was in this cabin that their first child, Jessie, was born. Two other daughters came later, Hattie and Ruth.

It was here, in the late '70's, that I first made Allen's acquaintance, through my brother, John W. Mailliard, who had become interested in birds and had taken some lessons in the preparation of specimens. Allen passed his time largely in collecting birds and small mammals for eastern people, of whose names he later recalled but a few, such as: Dr. C. Hart Merriam, of Washington, D. C.; Dr. Jonathan Dwight, Jr., of New York; William Brewster, of Cambridge, Massachusetts; Henry W. Henshaw, Washington, D. C.; Henry K. Coale, Chicago; and Charles K. Worthen, Warsaw, Illinois. There were others, but Allen himself could not recall



Fig. 2. CHARLES A. ALLEN, 1841-1930. PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN ABOUT 1895.

them the last time I asked him about them. Unfortunately he had recently destroyed practically all of his old correspondence and accounts, so that, in his later years, I was unable to get from him a list of those to whom he had disposed of his specimens. It was in 1877 that Allen called to Mr. Brewster's attention the differences in the tail feathers of some of the hummingbirds he was sending on from Nicasio, and suggested that there might be specific differences between these and the otherwise similar birds. Mr. Brewster agreed with him in this matter, but turned the specimens over to Henshaw, who decided that the idea was correct and described the Allen Hummingbird as distinct from the Rufous.

Somewhere in the '80's, Allen bought a small house situated not far from San Geronimo Station, on the edge of our Marin County property (Rancho San Geronimo) and a couple of miles from our family home. Here he pursued his vocation for many years, at times acting for us as fire guard and patrolman in the deer season and at other times often doing carpentry or other work for and with me. Many were the deer hunts and camps we had together, often with my brother and others accompanying us, and Allen certainly was a good and amusing camp mate.

This house was occupied by himself and family for over twenty years when, the whole ranch having changed hands, he bought a nearby lot from the new purchasers, built upon it and passed the rest of his life there. His vitality had latterly failed to such an extent that the last few years were passed in bed and the end came on June 29, 1930. His remains were cremated in Berkeley, California, at the Sunset Mausoleum.

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