

DID THE PRINTER'S DEVIL DO ALL THIS?

BY JOHN B. MAY, M.D.

THE editorial fraternity long ago developed a fine alibi for anything which went wrong in the printing line. "The devil did it" has covered a multitude of sins of omission and of commission.

Recently I was engaged for some time in scanning the files of certain old periodicals devoted to birds and bird-lore. In one supposedly scientific publication I found many references to birds whose names I had never met before, and also some peculiar statements, which may be of interest to the readers of this article. Certainly their discovery lightened my labors and brightened my days, even though they at the same time added many new names to the list of birds for which I search the woods and fields, the mountains, lakes, and seashore, each year. Some of the references, such as those to the "Heart Bird" and the "Greek Bird," may be local names of well-known birds, which I in my ignorance have never heard, but others were the result of the combination of a poorly-written manuscript, a non-scientific type-setter, and a non-functioning proof-reader. A few examples from the text may well precede the list of new names.

"A Turkey Vulture was host at my brother's farm one Saturday." (Doubtless a pleasant time was had by all.)

"There were two Sunny Owls shot here this winter. One was taken by an uncle and both have been mounted."

"I put the young Ma Marsh Hawks in the coop." (Where was Pa?)

"White-rumped Shreiks was seen in singles." (Seen or heard?)

"Not six feet away was a set of Woodrocks surrounded by water and almost completely covered."

"I had the pleasure of observing at close range a Pleated Woodpecker, a bird I have never seen here in the East." (Neither have I; have you?)

"Two beautiful lichen-covered nests of the Gnatcher came to my attention . . . I located two nests of the Tanger . . . A Down Woodpecker dug a hole."

"I found my first homed lark's nest. . . I am certain it was a homed lark."

One writer referred feelingly to "the beautiful Whooping Crow," whatever that is, and another wrote interestingly of

"Shelley's [Shylark," the "Hoodoe," and the "Sacred Imis of Egypt." An article "written by E—— R—— shortly before his death" was headed "From One Who is Game."

Some of the choicer bits of the new nomenclature follow: I particularly long to find the "Yellow-shafted Tickler" and the "Simpkin;" the "Pie-billed Grebe" and the "Red-mug Blackbird" excite my appetite; and I am sure that I should enjoy the gay company of the "Ruby-crowned Knight," the "Caroling Chickadee," and the "Bay-crested Warbler." The "Sam White Owl" and "Harry Woodpecker" should be boon companions, but they should avoid the "Copper Hawk" and the "Spotter Sandpiper."

Other interesting new species (new to me at least), were the Pacific Kitowit, Sooted Tern, Strom Petrel, Scotter, Rosette Spoonbill, Tufted Vulture, Gashawk, Groshawk, Goss Hawk, Sprey, Yellow-billed Sap Sucker, Lost Flycatcher, Boat-tailed Crackle, Blur Grosbeak, Lark Hunting, Violet Geese Swallow, White-runged Shrike (any relation to the Ladder-backed Woodpecker?), Black-throated Coreen Warbler, Ked-start, and Summer Yellowhead.

That the Editor was neither ignorant nor unobservant might be inferred from the fact that he himself on one occasion quoted and held up for ridicule a manuscript submitted to him for approval, which mentioned eggs of the "great cursted fly catch," the "Painting Bunting" and the rare "Profanitory" Warbler. So, as it wasn't the Editor, it must have been the Printer's Devil.

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COLOR-PHASES OF THE PURPLE FINCH

BY HELEN G. WHITTLE

IN my Peterborough, New Hampshire, records of abnormal coloration of the Purple Finch, this spring season has furnished the most examples. The color-phases noted are erythrism and xanthochroism. Whereas such phases are abnormal, they are by no means uncommon. In most cases observed it has not been possible to determine the sex. In some returning birds, however, the sex has been determined by knowing the approximate age of the birds, and in other cases by finding the bands polished, which indicates a female. For example, female Purple Finch No. 83998 (previously mentioned in this