

fed for some time on the flowers there, although it was raining pretty hard at the time and was getting dark. This was about 5.30 P.M.

The female *A. polytmus* rests in a more slim position than does her mate. Her note is exactly the same. I have no record of the note of the *Lampornis*; it seems to be a very silent bird. Its dark colour makes it appear a larger bird than it really is. Its tail is its chief beauty. This is composed of broad feathers, the two central ones being nearly black; the rest are a glowing reddish-purple colour, broadly barred towards the ends with greenish black; extreme tips greyish white. This fine tail is continually flirled widely open as the bird is feeding, and makes a beautiful purple fan. *L. mango* seems friendly towards its own and other species, and at times several will feed amicably together, but as a rule not more than one is seen at a time. *A. polytmus*, on the contrary, frequently appears to live in little colonies, perhaps a dozen or so frequenting a patch of rose-apple trees. This, however, refers only to the male bird.

The tiny *Mellisuga minima* was far less generally distributed than the other two species. It was fairly common at Constant Spring (six miles out of Kingston), and there were one or two in the hotel grounds at Spanish Town; but besides these I saw only two others at Montpelier, and none at all elsewhere. At Constant Spring they were mostly to be found by the roadsides and on the waste pieces of land that were thickly grown with ageratum, which plant they seemed to be very fond of, and which grew in profusion about 3 or 4 feet in height. Here, among butterflies, bees, and banana "quits," they hunted for their prey, and I vainly endeavoured to shoot them with sand; it had no effect upon them at all. I also as vainly tried to catch them in my butterfly-net; they would always keep just out of reach. When resting on a twig, I could sometimes get a butterfly-net within 2 feet of them, and then they would just shoot off like big bees and begin merrily feeding away among the ageratum again. *A. polytmus* can be caught in a butterfly-net with patience. I captured a couple of splendid



males thus one afternoon. I hung a bunch of rose-apple blossoms in the entrance of my net by string, then stalked the Humming-birds and held the net up as near to them as I could reach. One would come down now and then and hover a yard off in front, and then perhaps dash round and hover again close up to the back of the net, and then whir off up to the top of the tree again. The two I caught came down fearlessly and hovered close up to the blossoms, when a rapid swoop of the net made them prisoners.

The Jamaicans call the *Mellisuga minima* the "Bee Humming-bird," which is an appropriate name for it, as its habits are very like those of a bee, and there is not such a very great difference between the sizes of the two creatures, this little bird being only  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches from tip of beak to end of tail. The negroes in Jamaica call all Humming-birds "Doctor-birds," as they do also in Barbados and Dominica. A boy told me that doctors used the dried bodies for ingredients in some kind of medicine. Of course this is a fairy tale. But I think it is mentioned in a book called 'Obeah in the West Indies,' by J. Hesketh Bell, that the Obi men (sorcerers) use the bodies of Humming-birds as charms in certain cases, I think to protect banana and yam patches from thieves, the blacks always being highly superstitious. This would doubtless account for the name.

The Bee Humming-bird makes an exceedingly loud buzzing. On one occasion I looked among the grass at my feet for what I thought was a big bee or beetle buzzing on the ground, and presently discovered that it was one of these tiny birds slowly droning away among the twigs of a log-wood tree a few yards off. It was not feeding, but slowly buzzing about and settling on twigs and then flying off again, as if not satisfied with its perch. When flying away it looks exactly like a big bee, holding a straight course and flying at a fair pace. It looks very thick-set when at rest. This is chiefly owing to its very short tail. It droops its wings under its tail, which was the constant habit of all the Humming-birds I observed. I have watched it on a plumbago-tree while resting after feeding among the pretty blue



blossoms, singing its little song with great glee. Not much of a song certainly : about three little squeaky, feeble notes, repeated over and over again.

I did not obtain a single specimen of this species. While at Constant Spring I was mostly butterfly-hunting, and the few shots I had at these birds were with sand, which proved futile. I quite expected when leaving this district to find them common everywhere else, but never got another chance of shooting them. The colour of this bird is quite plain : dull green above and dull white below, without any of the splendid metallic colours so generally characteristic of this interesting and beautiful order of birds.

After leaving Jamaica we went to Dominica, stopping a week end at Barbados to change steamers. I saw two species of Humming-birds in Barbados, viz. *Eulampis holosericeus* and one of the little crested species : either *Bellona cristata* or *B. exilis* ; I do not know which, as, the birds being always above me, I was unable to see the colour of their crests. There were several of these feeding among the blossoms that grew on a tree close to the Marine Hotel. I do not know the tree, but in general appearance it was not unlike an acacia and had white (or cream-coloured) blossoms, which smelt very sweet. On this tree were always other small birds feeding, and the Humming-birds took no notice of them and in no way disturbed them, so far as I could see. One *E. holosericeus* here was feeding among the grasses, evidently picking up insects from the heads that had gone to seed.

Dominica has four species of Humming-birds—*Eulampis holosericeus*, *E. jugularis*, *Bellona exilis*, and *Thalurania wagleri*. Here the little *B. exilis* is exceedingly common—much the most plentiful of the lot, while the *Thalurania* is the least common, or, at any rate, very much more local in its distribution, as it is found only up in the high mountains. I do not think I saw it at a less elevation than 1000 feet ; but this altitude is guess-work on my part, as I had no means of finding the height above sea-level. At any rate this bird is found up in regions where one is among the



clouds, and is always liable to get a drenching with rain, although down below it may be brilliantly fine all day, these mountain-peaks almost always having clouds hanging about them.

As soon as one begins to hear the beautiful clear bell-like notes of the *Myiadestes dominicanus* ("Siffleur montagne," in native patois), which are so characteristic of the gloomy damp forests up in these regions, then one begins to look out for the pretty little Wagler's Wood-nymph, which does not appear to be a very common bird, or, if common, is not often seen, owing to its retiring habits. I made two visits for it, but saw few specimens, and only succeeded in shooting three, one of which was too hopelessly smashed up to be of any use as a specimen. These birds are very tame and allow a close approach. They seem to be very sedentary in their habits. I only saw two feeding, all the others being discovered sitting motionless on twigs. From this fact, probably, they appear to be less common than they really are, as it is not easy to discover so small an object among the huge tangle of tropical vegetation unless it betrays itself by movement. These birds sit usually in a bunched-up position and appear very blue in colour, especially when one has been looking at the green *E. holosericeus*.

In hunting Humming-birds in these situations one has to take into consideration before shooting them the possibility of retrieving them when shot, as, although a bird may be perched only a few feet off the mountain-path, yet it may be in such a position that when shot it would fall down the mountain-side, which is often very sheer, and be hopelessly lost among the dense vegetation growing down the sides. So I always observed the habit of taking stock of where the bird would fall before shooting him. The first one of this species that I came across was in such a situation that I could not shoot at it. It was sitting on a twig just off the path and a little below me, with a dense tangle of vegetation growing all down the mountain-side underneath him. So I watched him from a distance of only a few feet and made a sketch of him. He was uttering a feeble little song, with no



sweetness in it, only a series of weak little squeaky notes which would not have been heard many yards off, but still a continuous song. I presently threw some stones gently at it, in hopes of it shifting its position to a more favourable one for shooting at. But he still kept to the same side of the path and began feeding among the flowering shrubs down the mountain-side, and so I lost him. I saw two or three more that day and shot one, but it was smashed beyond repair. My next expedition to the same locality found one of this species—perhaps the same bird—in exactly the same place where I saw the first one, and this time, observing there were some large broad leaves immediately underneath him, from which I could retrieve him without any risk to my neck, I shot him. He fell on to one of these leaves, but before I could get at him had recovered and went whizzing down the mountain-side, and so was lost. After a long hunt in the gloomy forest among dense vegetation, tree-ferns, creepers, rotten logs, stones, swamps, &c., I had similar bad luck with another one, only wounding him, and being unable to follow his course through the dense growth. After that, on my way back, I had better luck and killed a couple of good specimens, not a bit spoilt by the shot. I spied the first sitting on a twig of a flowering tree with white blossoms, luckily on the upper side of the path; so, leaving my pony in charge of the negro boy, I crawled up the bank until I was within shot of him. He frequently came back to the same twig after feeding among the blossoms, this twig being so close to me that I could not shoot without blowing him all to pieces. At last I got a shot as he was feeding, but missed him. However, he did not seem to take that amiss, but went on feeding (his humming is not very loud), and presently came back to rest on his favourite perch. I was a little further away by this time and shot him quite clean. The other I shot was perched on a twig over the pathway in a dark gloomy corner. This was also on a tree with white blossoms.

I never heard the note of this bird, except the little song before mentioned.



These two specimens are almost exactly alike in plumage, one of them being only a trifle brighter in colour. On dissection they proved undoubtedly male and female, the male being the brighter coloured one. The sizes were: ♂  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches in length,  $6\frac{1}{8}$  in breadth; ♀  $4\frac{1}{4}$  in length, 6 in breadth. This surprised me much, as I had a pamphlet by G. E. and A. H. Verrill, 'Notes on the Fauna of the Island of Dominica' [from 'Transactions' of the Conn. Academy, vol. viii. p. 315, April, 1892], kindly given me by Mr. A. Frampton, a resident in Dominica, in which the authors state, when treating of this species, "Sexes very different in plumage." They further state that they only met with one female, which they obtained, and that the males were observed about the nests and *sitting on the eggs*. I had a conversation on this subject with Dr. Nicholls while in Dominica, and he was of opinion that the two sexes of this species are similar in colour, and that Verrill had made some mistake about this. Since my return to England I have further pursued this matter, but find that Gould and Elliot both describe the female as being quite different from the male. Gould also figures a white-breasted female in his grand monograph. I have also examined the series of skins in the British Museum, and among several of the wholly green and blue birds there is a white-breasted one, labelled a female, but the locality is not noted on the label. Both my birds are entirely green and blue. One of the Gould cases in the British Museum appears to me to be wrongly labelled. The birds seem to me to be of this species, but are named *Eucephala grayi*, which is coloured almost exactly like *Thalurania wagleri*, but the green is of a rather yellower tone, and the bird has a red beak, whereas the beak of *T. wagleri* is black, with the lower mandible flesh-coloured for about three-fourths its length from the base.

In its geographical distribution this bird is remarkable. It is described as being found in the north of Brazil, and Gould says it may possibly be found in Guiana, which is nearly on the Equator. Then it is found nowhere else except in this island of Dominica, which is about  $15^{\circ}$  N. lat. This is very remarkable when we come to consider the numerous islands



between these two localities. How has this isolation come about?\*

The beautiful *Eulampis jugularis* is very common in + Dominica, and it seems to have an extensive range of country, being found in equal abundance up in the haunts of *T. wagleri* and in the low country right down to the coast. Up in the mountains it will be found frequently sunning itself by the pathway-sides or feeding among banana patches, or among the blossoms of a tree that grows to a good size and has large bell-shaped yellow flowers. Along the coast, wherever there are colonies of native huts it will be found again, feeding among bananas, oleander, and hibiscus. Bananas are favourite hunting-grounds, and where a patch is of any great size one may come across several of the birds. I never saw them in close proximity, except on one occasion, when there seemed to be two or three hunting one patch of rather small dimensions; but it is impossible to tell whether one sees the same bird over again or different specimens, unless they are on view at the same time.

They are quite tame, and being of a fair size are easily discovered, even when at rest, especially as they are fond of sunning their lovely plumage on a conspicuous dead twig by the sides of the paths, and often will not trouble to fly away though one passes within a few feet of them. Almost all the Humming-birds I met with seemed to prefer perching in conspicuous positions, choosing a bare twig outside a bush rather than in the bush itself among the foliage. The male looks splendid as he sits on a bare twig, basking in the rays of the hot sun, by some steaming forest pathway, his tail widely spread and the sun flashing from his crimson-purple throat and breast and from his golden-green wings and curious steely-blue upper and under tail-coverts, the whole set off by the velvety blackness of the rest of his plumage; and a peculiarity is that the metallic colour on his wings extends to the primary feathers. There is considerable variety in the brightness of colour of the plumage, some males being much more gorgeous than others.

\* [The old localities are wrong. The species is peculiar to Dominica. Cf. Salvin, Cat. B. xvi. p. 87.—EDD.]



Sclater, William Lutley. 1896. "A Visit to Dassen Island, the home of the Jackass Penguin." *Ibis* 2(4), 519–525.

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