

seems to come by way of the steel-trap, when the species becomes too familiar in the farmers' poultry yards. When skins are desired a good method of killing the trapped owls employed by two young farmers is that of smothering the birds in the oat-bin.—ALTHEA R. SHERMAN, *National, Iowa*.

**Status of the Picidæ in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.**—Personally, I have, to the date of writing, found five forms of Woodpecker in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, within the limits of Cameron county, they are:

1. *Dryobates scalaris symplectus*. Abundant resident.
2. *Sphyrapicus varius varius*. Common migrant and occasional winter sojourner.
3. *Centurus aurifrons*. Abundant resident.
4. *Colaptes auratus luteus*. Fall and winter visitant.
5. *Colaptes cafer collaris*. One record, ♂ Jan. 8, 1912, collected by myself, and now in collection of Dr. J. Dwight, Jr.

Possibly *Melanerpes erythrocephalus* occurs as a winter straggler, though I have not yet found it.

Indications point to the presence of another Woodpecker, as yet unrecorded by ornithologists. It is known to a number of the native Mexican hunters, who designate it as "carpentera grande"; and describe it as much over a foot in length; black, with scarlet crest: generally occurring during the warm season, and confined to the heaviest growth bordering the river. Totally absent some years. The season of occurrence would at once eliminate the possibility of it being *Asyndesmus lewisi*; and the only other Woodpecker that seems to fit, even in fair degree, the description and conditions is *Phlæotomus scapularis*. This Mexican species ranges well up into the state of Tamaulipas, so it might furnish us stragglers now and then, as in the case with *Amizilis tzacatl*, *Ceryle torquata*, *Trogon ambiguus*, etc.—AUSTIN PAUL SMITH, *Brownsville, Texas*.

**Differences due to Sex in the Black Swift.**—In the treatment accorded *Nephæcetes niger borealis* by Ridgway in the volume last published of his "Birds of North and Middle America" (vol. 5, 1911, pp. 703, 707), the sexes are declared to be different in markings, the adult male uniformly sooty underneath, the adult female with the feathers of the posterior underparts always more or less distinctly tipped with whitish. A different conclusion had been arrived at by Mr. Frank M. Drew (Bull. Nutt. Orn. Club, VII, 1882, 182, 183), who declared that the fully mature female was indistinguishable in color from the male, four years being assumed to be the length of time required to attain this plumage. Mr. Ridgway cites Drew's plumage description in full, with the following comment: "Mr. Drew is undoubtedly mistaken, however, in assuming that the sexes are alike in coloration, for all the sexed specimens examined by me from whatever locality, show that all those with white-tipped feathers on posterior underparts are females and all those without these white-tipped feathers

are males. This is true of all the subspecies, except that in the West Indian forms these white tips are much less distinct, sometimes nearly obsolete" (p. 707, footnote b).

In a series of Black Swifts collected by myself in southeastern Alaska in June and July, 1909 (see Swarth, Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool., 5, 1911, 71) there is one female (no. 9363 Univ. Calif. Mus. Vert. Zool.) that in color and markings is absolutely indistinguishable from the males. The underparts are uniformly dark (except for one pure white feather on the throat), of exactly the same sooty hue as the males, and with not the slightest trace of the scale-like white markings on the abdomen, which Mr. Ridgway believes to be invariably present in the female. Like the others, however, it differs from the males in having a square, rather than a forked tail. The birds collected by me were all carefully dissected to ascertain the sex, and the possibility of there having been a mistake made in this specimen, is precluded by the fact that this particular female contained within it an egg that would have been laid, probably within twenty-four hours. There is no doubt, therefore, that in this case we have a female indistinguishable in coloration from the male, so that sometimes, at least, the sexes *are* alike in coloration, as Mr. Drew affirmed.

It is with some reluctance that the above statements are offered. The writer is unwilling to appear to be hypercritical of a work so comprehensive, and so admirably carried out, that it should be spared carping comment on immaterial points, and these remarks should not be taken in that sense. They are merely the contribution of an additional fact that may modify previous conceptions of this particular species.—H. S. SWARTH, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoölogy, University of California, Berkeley, California.*

**A Crested Flycatcher in December at Cambridge, Mass.**—On December 20, 1911, in the Fresh Pond Reservation, Cambridge, I saw a Crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*). It was at midday in the warm sunshine. The bird was among shrub growth planted on a bank of some extent on the northwestern border of the reservation. As I followed along at the foot of the ridge, my attention was quickened by hearing call-notes which could not be ascribed to any bird that might be expected to be heard at this season. When shortly my glasses covered it, it was immediately recognized to be a Crested Flycatcher. The pale reddish wing and sulphur-yellow side were plainly presented to view, also the pale margining of the wing-coverts. Later the pearl-gray breast was seen and the sulphur-yellow of the entire under parts. The bird took short flights from one shrub to another and frequently dropped to the ground for an instant, at once returning to a near perch. Apparently it was procuring its food from the ground, perhaps discerning and obtaining the bodies of dead insects. The ground was bare and had been so up to this time. No perch taken was more than two or three feet high, and usually they were only a few inches above the ground. I followed the flycatcher along the shrubbery for five hundred feet or more, while it was thus engaged and remained with it for



Swarth, Harry S. 1912. "Differences Due to Sex in the Black Swift." *The Auk* 29, 241–242. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4071378>.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/54327>

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.2307/4071378>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/86231>

**Holding Institution**

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

**Sponsored by**

Smithsonian

**Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.