

Icteria virens longicauda. LONG-TAILED CHAT.—A common breeder at Osoyoos; rare at Vernon.

Oroscoptes montanus. SAGE THRASHER.—This is another species the addition of which to the Canadian list is due to the energy of Mr. Green. He reports it as a scarce local breeder in the sage brush country of Osoyoos district, and has sent me a handsome set of four eggs with the male bird collected 21st June of this year.

THE DESTRUCTION OF BIRDS AT NIAGARA FALLS.

BY LEON J. COLE.

IN HIS interesting account, in the July 'Auk,' of the destruction of a large number of Whistling Swans at Niagara Falls, on May 15, 1908, Fleming¹ mentions that birds have been killed by going over the Falls in times past. In this same connection the following extracts from what is said to be the first description of Niagara Falls published in the English language may be of interest to ornithologists. The extracts are from "A Letter from Mr. Kalm, a Gentleman of Sweden, now on his Travels in America, to his Friend in Philadelphia; containing a particular Account of the Great Fall of Niagara," written at Albany, September 2, 1750. This account first came to my notice in the recent excellent monograph on 'The Falls of Niagara,' by Professor Spencer,² in which it is republished as an appendix; but in quoting I have taken directly from a reprint of the original account of John Bartram³

¹ Fleming, James H. The destruction of Whistling Swans (*Olor columbianus*) at Niagara Falls. *Auk*, Vol. XXV, pp. 306-309, 1908.

² Spencer, Joseph William Winthrop. The Falls of Niagara; their evolution and varying relations to the Great Lakes; characteristics of the power, and the effects of its diversion. Canada Dept. of Mines, Geol. Surv. Branch, 1905-6, xxxii + 490 pp., pls. and maps. 1907.

³ Observations | on the | Inhabitants, Climate, Soil, Rivers, Productions, | Animals, and other matters worthy of Notice. | Made by | Mr. John Bartram, | in his Travels from | Pensilvania | to | Onondago, Oswego and the Lake Ontario, | In Canada. | To which is annex'd, a curious Account of the | Cataracts at Niagara. | By Mr. Peter Kalm, | A Swedish Gentleman who travelled there. | London: | Printed for J. Whiston and B. White, in | Fleet-Street, 1751. [Reprinted by W. F. Humphrey, Geneva, N. Y., 1895.] viii + 94 pp.

of his "Travels from Pensilvania to Onondago, Oswego and the Lake Ontario," in which Kalm's letter was first published. Kalm gives a really excellent description of the Falls, and one which is very temperate throughout, a characteristic none too common in the accounts of the early travellers. Kalm, in fact, apparently prides himself on this attitude, for he says in his letter, after stating that he has obtained all the information he could by questioning the French at Fort Niagara: "But as I have found by experience in my other travels, and that very few observe nature's works with accuracy, or report the truth precisely, I cannot now be entirely satisfied without seeing with my own eyes whenever 'tis in my power." He says of Father Hennepin, who had previously given the height of the Falls as 600 feet; "but he has gained little credit in *Canada*; the name of honour they give him there, is *un grand Menteur*, or *The great Liar*; he writes of what he saw in places where he never was. . . . For my part, who am not fond of the *Marvellous*, I like to see things just as they are, and so to relate them." He himself gives 137 feet as the height (on the authority of "the king's engineer in *Canada*"), which is considerably *under* the present measurements.

Of the loss of bird life at the Falls he says: "Several of the *French* gentlemen told me, that when birds come flying into this fog or smog of the fall [the mist from the cataract], they fall down and perish in the Water; either because their wings are become wet, or that the noise of the fall astonishes them, and they know not where to go in the Dark: but others were of opinion, that seldom or never any bird perishes there in that manner; because, as they all agreed, among the abundance of birds found dead below the fall, there are no other sorts than such as live and swim frequently in the water; as swans, geese, ducks, water-hens, teal, and the like. And very often great flocks of them are seen going to destruction in this manner: they swim in the river above the fall, and so are carried down lower and lower by the water, and as water-fowl commonly take great delight in being carry'd with the stream, so here they indulge themselves in enjoying this pleasure so long, till the swiftness of the water becomes so great, that 'tis no longer possible for them to rise, but they are driven down the precipice, and perish. They are observ'd when they draw nigh the fall, to

endeavour with all their might to take wing and leave the water, but they cannot. In the months of *September* and *October* such abundant quantities of dead waterfowl are found every morning below the Fall, on the shore, that the garrison of the fort for a long time live chiefly upon them; besides the fowl, they find also several sorts of dead fish, also deer, bears, and other animals which have tried to cross the water above the fall; the larger animals are generally found broken to pieces."

Further on he adds: "I was told at *Ofwego*, that in *October*, or thereabouts, such plenty of feathers are to be found here below the Fall, that a man in a days time can gather enough of them for several beds, which feathers they said came off the birds kill'd at the Fall. I ask'd the *French*, if this was true? They told me they had never seen any such thing; but that if the feathers were pick'd off the dead birds, there might be such a quantity."

Kalm remarks that "It was formerly thought impossible for any body living to come at the Island that is in the middle of the fall" (Goat Island), but relates that, some 12 years or so previous to his visit, two Indians in a canoe drifted down the river by accident, and managed to land on the island. After ineffectual efforts to get off, in the course of which they made "a ladder or shrouds of the bark of lindentree (which is very tough and strong)" and descended to the foot of the Fall, only to be dashed back when they attempted to swim ashore, they were finally rescued, when they had been there nine days and were almost starved, by other Indians, who waded across to the island with the help of poles pointed with iron. Kalm adds, in his letter to his friend: "Now since the way to this island has been found, the *Indians* go there often to kill deer, which having tried to cross the river above the fall, were driven upon the island by the stream: but if the King of *France* would give me all *Canada*, I would not venture to go to this island; and were you to see it, Sir, I am sure you would have the same sentiment."



Cole, Leon J. 1909. "The Destruction of Birds at Niagara Falls." *The Auk* 26, 63–65. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4070476>.

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