ing along the head; a yellowish-white line over the eye; wings barred with yellowish-red and brownish-black, and minutely sprinkled with the latter colour, as are the wing-coverts, which, together with the scapulars, are largely spotted with black, and tinged with grey; tail similarly barred and dotted; terminal half of the inner webs of the three outer feathers white, their extremities light red; lower parts dull reddish-yellow, sprinkled with dusky; a band of whitish feathers barred with black on the fore neck. Female like the male, but without white on the tail.

Male, $12\frac{3}{4}$, 26. Female, $13\frac{1}{4}$, 30.

W H I P - P O O R - W I L L .

†CAPRIMULGUS VOCIFERUS, *Wils.*

PLATE XLII.—MALE AND FEMALE.

This bird makes its appearance in most parts of our Western and Southern Districts, at the approach of spring, but is never heard, and indeed scarcely ever occurs, in the State of Louisiana. The more barren and mountainous parts of the Union seem to suit it best. Accordingly, the open Barrens of Kentucky, and the country through which the Alleghany ridges pass, are more abundantly supplied with it than any other regions. Yet, wherever a small tract of country, thinly covered with timber, occurs in the Middle Districts, there the *Whip-poor-will* is heard during the spring and early autumn.

This species of Night-jar, like its relative the Chuck-will's-widow, is seldom seen during the day, unless when accidentally discovered in a state of repose, when, if startled, it rises and flies off, but only to such a distance as it considers necessary, in order to secure it from the farther intrusion of the disturber of its noon-day slumbers. Its flight is very low, light, swift, noiseless, and protracted, as the bird moves over the places which it inhabits, in pursuit of the moths, beetles and other insects, of which its food is composed. During the day, it sleeps on the ground, the lowest branches of small trees and bushes, or the fallen trunks of trees so abundantly dispersed through the woods. In such situations, you may approach within a few feet of it; and, should you observe it whilst asleep, and not make any noise sufficient to alarm it, will suffer you to pass quite near without taking flight, as it seems to sleep with great soundness, especially about the middle of the

day. In rainy or very cloudy weather, it sleeps less, and is more on the alert. Its eyes are then kept open for hours at a time, and it flies off as soon as it discovers an enemy approaching, which it can do, at such times, at a distance of twenty or thirty yards. It always appears with its body parallel to the direction of the branch or trunk on which it sits, and, I believe, never alights *across* a branch or a fence-rail.

No sooner has the sun disappeared beneath the horizon, than this bird bestirs itself, and sets out in pursuit of insects. It passes low over the bushes, moves to the right or left, alights on the ground to secure its prey, passes repeatedly and in different directions over the same field, skims along the skirts of the woods, and settles occasionally on the tops of the fence-stakes or on stumps of trees, from whence it sallies, like a Fly-catcher, after insects, and, on seizing them, returns to the same spot. When thus situated, it frequently alights on the ground, to pick up a beetle. Like the Chuck-will's-widow, it also balances itself in the air, in front of the trunks of trees, or against the sides of banks, to discover ants, and other small insects that may be lurking there. Its flight is so light and noiseless, that whilst it is passing within a few feet of a person, the motion of its wings is not heard by him, and merely produces a gentle undulation in the air. During all this time, it utters a low murmuring sound, by which alone it can be discovered in the dark, when passing within a few yards of one, and which I have often heard when walking or riding through the barrens at night.

Immediately after the arrival of these birds, their notes are heard in the dusk and through the evening, in every part of the thickets, and along the skirts of the woods. They are clear and loud, and to me are more interesting than those of the Nightingale. This taste I have probably acquired, by listening to the Whip-poor-will in parts where Nature exhibited all her lone grandeur, and where no discordant din interrupted the repose of all around. Only think, kind reader, how grateful to me must have been the cheering voice of this my only companion, when, fatigued and hungry, after a day of unremitted toil, I have planted my camp in the wilderness, as the darkness of night put a stop to my labours! I have often listened to the Nightingale, but never under such circumstances, and therefore its sweetest notes have never awakened the same feeling.

The Whip-poor-will continues its lively song for several hours after sunset, and then remains silent until the first dawn of day, when its notes echo through every vale, and along the declivities of the mountains, until the beams of the rising sun scatter the darkness that overhung the face of nature. Hundreds are often heard at the same time in different parts of the woods, each trying to out-do the others; and when you are told that the notes of this bird may be heard at the distance of several hundred yards, you may

Whip-poor-will!

Black Oak or Quercitron! Quercus tinctoria?

form an idea of the pleasure which every lover of nature must feel during the time when this chorus is continued.

Description is incapable of conveying to your mind any accurate idea of the notes of this bird, much less of the feelings which they excite. Were I to tell you that they are, in fact, not strictly musical, you might be disappointed. The cry consists of three distinct notes, the first and last of which are emphatical and sonorous, the intermediate one less so. These three notes are preceded by a low cluck, which seems preparatory to the others, and which is only heard when one is near the bird. A fancied resemblance which its notes have to the syllables *whip-poor-will*, has given rise to the common name of the bird.

This species is easily shot, when the moon is shining, and the night clear, as you may then approach it without much caution. It is, however, difficult to hit it on wing, on account of the zig-zag lines in which it flies, as well as the late hour at which it leaves its resting-place. It is seldom killed, however, being too small to be sought as an article of food, although its flesh is savoury, and it is too harmless to excite dislike.

It deposits its eggs about the middle of May, on the bare ground, or on dry leaves, in the most retired parts of the thickets which it frequents. They are always two in number, of a short elliptical form, much rounded, and nearly equal at both ends, of a greenish-white colour, spotted and blotched with bluish-grey and light brown. The young burst the shell in fourteen days after the commencement of incubation, and look at first like a mouldy and almost shapeless mass, of a yellowish colour. When first able to fly they are of a brown colour, interspersed with patches of buff, the brown being already beautifully sprinkled with darker dots and zig-zag lines. They attain their full plumage before they depart, with their parents, for the south. I think their southward migration, which is performed by night, must be very rapid, as I have never found any of these birds in Louisiana at that season, whereas they proceed slowly on their return in spring. Both birds sit on the eggs, and feed the young for a long time after they are able to fly, either on wing, in the manner of the Common House Swallow, or while perched on the fences, wood-piles, or houses. The food of the young at first consists of ants, and partially digested beetles and large moths, which the parents disgorge; but at the end of a fortnight the parents present the food whole to the young, which then swallow it with ease.

Much has been said respecting the difference existing between the *Whip-poor-will* and the *Night Hawk*, for the purpose of shewing them to be distinct species. On this subject I shall only say, that I have known both birds from my early youth, and I have seldom seen a farmer or even a boy in the United States, who did not know the difference between them.

It is a remarkable fact that even the largest moths on which the Whip-poor-will feeds, are always swallowed tail foremost, and when swallowed, the wings and legs are found closely laid together, and as if partially glued by the saliva or gastric juice of the bird. The act of deglutition must be greatly aided by the long bristly feathers of the upper mandible, as these no doubt force the wings of the insects close together, before they enter the mouth.

I have represented a male and two females, as well as some of the insects on which they feed. The former are placed on a branch of Red Oak, that tree being abundant on the skirts of the Kentucky Barrens, where the Whip-poor-will is most plentiful.

WHIP-POOR-WILL, *Caprimulgus vociferus*, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. v. p. 71.

CAPRIMULGUS VOCIFERUS, Bonap. Syn., p. 62.

WHIP-POOR-WILL, *Caprimulgus vociferus*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. i. p. 422; vol. v. p. 405.

WHIP-POOR-WILL, *Caprimulgus vociferus*, Nutt. Man., vol. i. p. 614.

Bristles without lateral filaments; tail much rounded. General colour of upper parts dark brownish-grey, streaked and minutely sprinkled with brownish-black; quills and coverts dark brown, spotted in bars with light brownish-red; four middle tail-feathers like those of the back, the three lateral white in their terminal half; throat and breast similar to the back, with a transverse band of white on the fore neck, the rest of the lower parts paler and mottled. Female like the male, but with the lateral tail-feathers reddish-white toward the tip only, and the band across the fore neck pale yellowish-brown.

Male, $9\frac{1}{2}$, 19. Female.

GENUS II.—CHORDEILES, Swains. NIGHT-HAWK.

Mouth opening to beneath the centre of the eyes; bill extremely small; upper mandible with the tip decurved, and a deep lateral groove. Nostrils oblong, prominent, marginate. Eyes very large. Aperture of ear elliptical, very large. Head very large, depressed, but less so than in *Caprimulgus*. Claw of middle toe pectinate. No bristles at the base of the upper mandible. Wings very long, pointed, with the first quill longest, and the secondaries very short. Tail emarginate.

Whip-poor-will!

Black Oak or Quercitron! Quercus tinctoria?

Audubon, John James. 1840. "Whip-Poor Will, *Caprimulgus vociferus*. Wils. [Pl. 42]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 1, 155–158. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319155>.

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