LEAST PEWEE FLYCATCHER.

†MUSCICAPA PUSILLA, *Swains.*

PLATE LXVI.—MALE.

This small and plainly-coloured species, first described by my friend WILLIAM SWAINSON, Esq. in the *Fauna Boreali-Americana*, under the name of "*Tyrannula pusilla*," is a common inhabitant of the northern and north-western parts of America, but has not, I believe, been known to pass along our Atlantic shores. Dr. RICHARDSON, who observed it in the Fur Countries, says that "it was first seen by us at Carlton House, on the 19th of May, flitting about for a few days among low bushes on the banks of the river, after which it retired to the moist shady woods lying farther north."

My friend THOMAS NUTTALL, Esq. procured this bird on Wapatoe Island, which is formed by the junction of the Multnomah with the Columbia, 20 miles long, and 10 broad. The land is high and extremely fertile, and in most parts supplied with a heavy growth of cotton-wood, ash, and sweet-willow. But the chief wealth of the island consists of the numerous ponds in the interior, abounding with the common arrow-head, *Sagittaria sagittifolia*, to the root of which is attached a bulb growing beneath it in the mud. This bulb, to which the Indians give the name of Wapatoe, is the great article of food, and almost the staple article of commerce, on the Columbia. It is never out of season, so that at all times of the year the valley is frequented by the neighbouring Indians, who come to gather it. It is collected chiefly by the women, who take a light canoe in a pond, where the water is as high as the breast, and by means of their toes, separate the root from the bulb, which on being freed from the mud rises immediately to the surface of the water, and is thrown into the canoe. This plant is found through the whole extent of the Columbia Valley, but does not grow farther eastward.

"I observed," he continues, "a male of this species very active and cheerful, making his chief residence in a spreading oak, on the open border of a piece of forest. As usual, he took his station at the extremity of a dead branch, from whence, at pretty quick intervals, he darted after passing insects. When at rest, he raised his erectile crest, and in great earnest called out *sishui*, *sishui*, and sometimes *tsishea*, *tsishea*, in a lisping tone, rather quickly, and sometimes in great haste, so as to run both calls together. This brief, rather loud, quaint and monotonous ditty, was continued for hours together, at which time, so great was our little actor's abstraction; that he al-

Least Pewee Flycatcher.
White Oak. Quercus Prinus.

Male

lowed a near approach without any material apprehension. As I could not discover any nest, I have little doubt it was concealed either in some knot or laid on some horizontal branch."

I found this species both in Newfoundland and on the coast of Labrador in considerable numbers. In the latter country, where the bushes are low and the fir-trees seldom attain a height of thirty feet, I observed that it preferred for its residence the narrow and confined valleys which at that season (July) are clothed with luxuriant herbage, and abound in insects, to which this little Flycatcher gives chase with great activity, returning, as is the well-known habit of all our small species, to the twig or top of the plant which it has selected for its look-out station. Two males I observed one morning, were constantly engaged in pursuing each other, when at times they would mount to some height in the air, there meet, snap their bills violently, separate, and return to their posts. Their continued cries induced me to believe that they had females and nests in the valley; and after searching a good while, I had the gratification of finding one of them placed between two small twigs of a bush not above four feet in height. This nest was composed of delicate dry grasses and fibrous roots, so thinly arranged as to enable me to see through it. It contained five eggs, so nearly resembling those of our Little Red-start Flycatcher, that, had I not started the female from the nest, I should have been induced to pronounce them the property of that bird. They measured five and a half eighths by four-eighths, and were rather sharp at the smaller end, pure white, thinly spotted, and marked with different tints of light red, with a few dots of umber, principally toward the apex. Many of the young were able to fly before our departure, which took place on the 12th of August; and I think that the pair which I found breeding must have been later than usual in arriving in that country, as a very few days afterwards I found a good number fully fledged, and travelling along the shore of St. George's Bay in Newfoundland. This species may perhaps breed in Nova Scotia, as I have seen a specimen obtained there in the collection of my young friend THOMAS M'CULLOCH, Esq. of Halifax.

TYRANNULA PUSILLA, LITTLE TYRANT FLYCATCHER, Swains. and Rich. F. Bor. Amer., vol. ii. p. 144.

LITTLE TYRANT FLYCATCHER, *Muscicapa pusilla*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. v. p. 288.

Third quill longest, fourth scarcely shorter, second nearly one-twelfth shorter, and exceeding the first by three and a quarter twelfths; tail slightly emarginate; upper parts light greenish-brown; loreal band whitish, a narrow pale ring surrounding the eye; wings olive-brown, with two bands of dull white, secondaries margined with the same; tail olive-brown, the lateral

feathers lighter, the outer web pale brownish-grey; fore part of neck and a portion of the breast and sides ash-grey, the rest of the lower parts pale yellow.

Male, $5\frac{2}{12}$, wing, $2\frac{5}{12}$.

Columbia River. Fur countries. Labrador. Newfoundland. Rare in the Atlantic States.

THE WHITE OAK.

QUERCUS PRINUS, *Willd.* Sp. Pl., vol. iv. p. 439. *Pursh*, Fl. Amer., vol. ii. p. 633.—QUERCUS PRINUS PALUSTRIS, *Mich.* Arbr. Forest. de L'Amér. Sept. vol. ii. p. 51. Pl. 7.—MONOCIA POLYANDRIA, *Linn.*—AMENTACEÆ, *Juss.*

Leaves oblongo-oval, acute, largely toothed, the teeth nearly equal, dilated, and callous at the tip; cupule craterate, attenuated at the base; acorn ovate. This species grows in low shady woods, and along the margins of rivers, from Pennsylvania to Florida. The wood is porous, and of inferior quality.

SMALL HEADED FLYCATCHER.

+MUSCICAPA MINUTA, *Wilson.*

PLATE LXVII.—MALE.

The sight of the figure of this species brings to my recollection a curious incident of long-past days, when I drew it at Louisville in Kentucky. It was in the early part of the spring of 1808, thirty-two years ago, that I procured a specimen of it while searching the margins of a pond.

In those happy days, kind reader, I thought not of the minute differences by which one species may be distinguished from another in words, or of the necessity of comparing tarsi, toes, claws, and quills, although I have, as you are aware, troubled you with tedious details of this sort. When ALEXANDER WILSON visited me at Louisville, he found in my already large collection of drawings, a figure of the present species, which, being at that time unknown to him, he copied and afterwards published in his great work, but without acknowledging the privilege that had thus been granted to him. I have more than once regretted this, not by any means so much on my own ac-

Least Pewee Flycatcher.
White Oak. Quercus Prinus.

Male

Audubon, John James. 1840. "Least Pewee Flycatcher, *Muscicapa pusilla*, Swains. [Pl. 66]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 1, 236–238. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319179>.

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