THE AMERICAN POKE-WEED.

PHYTOLACCA DECANDRA, *Willd. Sp. Pl.*, vol. i. p. 322. *Pursch, Fl. Amer.*, vol. i. p. 324.
—DECANDRIA DECAGYNIA, *Linn.*—ATRIPLICES, *Juss.*

This species is distinguished by its elliptico-lanceolate leaves, and decandrous flowers, the other species differing in the number of stamina and one of them being diœcious. The berries, which are nearly globular, are disposed in an elongated, pendulous raceme, and are of a purplish-black colour. The flowers are white, their peduncles, partial and general, of a bright carmine-purple colour.

PROTHONOTARY SWAMP-WARBLER.

+*HELINAIA PROTONOTARIUS, Lath.*

PLATE CVI.—MALE AND YOUNG.

I never saw this pretty bird in any of our eastern districts, and rarely farther up the Ohio than Louisville, in the neighbourhood of which place it rears its young. Louisiana seems in fact better suited to its habits than any other state, on account of its numerous lakes, creeks and lagoons, overshadowed by large trees, which are favourite places of resort for this species. It is fond of flying over the waters of these creeks and lagoons, and is seldom seen in the interior of the woods. Its flight is rapid, and more steady than is usual in birds of its genus; and as it moves along, the brightness of its colours attracts the eye. On alighting, it moves rapidly along the twigs, partly sidewise, frequently turning about and extending its neck to look under the leaves, from which it picks various kinds of insects. It often perches upon the rank grasses and water plants, in quest of minute molluscous animals which creep upon them, and which, together with small land snails, I have found in its stomach. It does not perform *sorties*, or sally forth after flying insects, as many other Warblers are in the habit of doing. It has a few notes for its song, which possess no interest. The males, when chasing each other, keep up a creaking noise, until the little battle is over, when they perch and balance their body with much grace and liveliness.

I have observed their arrival in Louisiana to take place, according to the state of the weather, from the middle of March to the first of April. At Henderson, in Kentucky, they do not arrive until a month later. They remain until October, but, I am inclined to believe, rear only a single brood in a season. The nest is fixed in the fork of a small twig bending over the water, and is constructed of slender grasses, soft mosses, and fine fibrous roots. The number of eggs is from four to six. I could never ascertain whether the male assists in incubation, as the difference of plumage in the sexes is not perceptible when the bird is at large, and indeed can hardly be traced when one has procured the male and the female for comparison. It cannot be called a plentiful species. To search for them on the high lands, or at any considerable distance from the kind of places above mentioned, would prove quite useless.

Dr. BACHMAN informs me that he has watched this species for hours at a time, when on the borders of streams, and observed it to seize insects on wing by gliding through the air after them, but never heard it click its bill, as is usual with Flycatchers. It breeds in South Carolina, and he saw a pair with four young ones near Charleston, on the 1st of June 1836.

The plant on which you see these birds, grows in swampy places, but is extremely rare, and I have not been able to procure any scientific appellation for it. In Louisiana, it is called the *cane vine*. It bears a small white flower in clusters. The berries are bitter and nauseous. The stem, which runs up and over trees, resembles that of other climbing plants, is extremely elastic, and as tough as a cord. The leaves, of which you see the form and colour, are also tough and thick.

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER, *Sylvia Protonotarius*, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. iii. p. 72.

SYLVIA PROTONOTARIUS, Bonap. Syn., p. 86.

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER, *Sylvia Protonotarius*, vol. i. p. 410.

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER, *Sylvia Protonotarius*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. i. p. 22; vol. v. p. 460.

Adult Male.

Bill nearly as long as the head, slender, tapering, nearly straight, as deep as broad at the base. Nostrils basal, lateral, elliptical, half closed by a membrane. Head rather small. Neck short. Body rather slender. Feet of ordinary length, slender; tarsus longer than the middle toe, covered anteriorly with a few scutella, the uppermost long: toes scutellate above, the inner free, the hind toe of moderate size; claws slender, compressed, acute, arched.

Plumage soft, blended, tufty. Wings of ordinary length, acute, the first and second quills longest. Tail nearly even, of twelve straight, rather

narrow feathers. Bill brownish-black. Iris hazel. Feet and claws greyish-blue. Head all round, neck and under parts generally, of a bright rich pure yellow, paler on the abdomen, and passing into white on the under tail-coverts. Fore part of the back and lesser wing-coverts yellowish-green. Lower back and wings light greyish-blue. Inner webs of the quills blackish. Inner webs of the tail-feathers bluish-grey at the base, then white to near the tip, which is black, as well as the outer webs. The two middle feathers blackish, tinged with greyish-blue.

Length $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches, extent of wings $8\frac{1}{2}$; beak along the ridge $\frac{7}{12}$, along the gap $\frac{3}{4}$; tarsus $1\frac{1}{2}$.

Adult Female.

The differences which the female exhibits are so slight as scarcely to be describable, the tints being merely a little duller.

GOLDEN-WINGED SWAMP-WARBLER.

+*HELINAIA CHRYSOPTERA*, Linn.

PLATE CVII.—MALE AND FEMALE.

Although I have met with this species entering the United States from the Texas in the month of April, and have procured several specimens in Kentucky and Louisiana, as well as a single one in New Jersey, I never had the good fortune to find its nest. When it first makes its appearance in Louisiana or Kentucky, it usually resorts to the higher branches of trees, where, amid the opening leaflets and blossoms, it actively searches for its insect food, occasionally following its prey on wing to some distance, and moving by short leaps among the twigs, in the manner of *Helinaia carbonata*, which, in its elongated and slender shape, it in some measure resembles. The flight of this species is, unlike that of the Cape May Warbler, *Sylvicola maritima*, elevated, swift, and irregularly undulated, until it is about to alight, when it dives toward the spot selected by it, as most Warblers are wont to do. I never saw a bird of this species in autumn, and therefore infer that its southward journey must be accomplished in a very secret and careful manner, or by night. A male and a female are figured in their perfect spring plumage.

R.F.
Prothonotary Swamp Warbler.
 1. Male. 2. Female.
Cane Vine

Audubon, John James. 1841. "Prothonotary Swamp-Warbler, *Helinaia protonotarius*, Lath. [Pl. 106]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 2, 89–91. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319219>.

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