BAY-WINGED BUNTING.

+*EMBERIZA GRAMINEA, Gmel.*

PLATE CLIX.—MALE.

I have never seen the Bay-winged Bunting in any portion of Louisiana, Missouri, Kentucky, or Ohio, and am therefore inclined to look upon it as a resident of the country lying to the eastward of the range of the Alleghanies. It there occurs from Georgia to Massachusetts, both along the shores and inland, as far as the base of the mountains, and here and there on the mountains themselves, but seldom in places to which cultivation has not extended. I have thought it prepossessed in favour of sandy ground, and dry barren soils. It sings sweetly, and at times for half an hour, without changing its place, either from the tops of the sassafras or sumach bushes which grow along the fences, or from the upper bar or stake of a fence itself. During this little serenade it is easily approached, but when on the ground, where it runs nimbly and with grace, it is rather shy. It is fond of scratching in the warm and dry sand, and of wallowing in it, to cleanse its body. Its flight, which is easy, consists of a succession of gentle undulations, and, when it is chased, sometimes extends over the whole of a field. It is a solitary bird, and is rather pugnacious, for when two males or two females happen to meet, little skirmishes frequently ensue. The nest, which is placed among the grass, and partly sunk in the ground, little attention being paid to its concealment, is prettily constructed. It is formed externally of leaves and fine grass, and is well lined with horse hair, so as to look neat and comfortable. The female lays from four to six eggs, about the middle of April, in favourable seasons, and generally rears two broods each year. I have shot these birds during winter, in the neighbourhood of Lancaster in Pennsylvania, where but few are seen. At the same period of the year they were found numerous along the sea-coast of Virginia and Carolina. Their food consists principally of the seeds of grasses and other plants, although they sometimes run after insects and eat them also. Their flesh is juicy, tender and savoury.

This species extends its migrations to the shores of the Columbia river, where it was procured by Dr. TOWNSEND; and it is mentioned by Dr. RICHARDSON as one of the birds that reach the prairies of the Saskatchewan early in May, to depart in September. In these distant localities it breeds on the ground, as it is wont to do in our own Middle Districts, as far south as

Maryland. During winter it is found in astonishing numbers about all the old fields in South Carolina, Georgia, the Floridas, and Alabama. The eggs measure seven-eighths of an inch in length, seven-twelfths in breadth, with a bluish-white ground, almost entirely covered with undefined markings of pale reddish-brown, more closely set towards the larger end; but they vary much, some being almost white. I have found many nests of this species on Chelsea Beach, in July and August.

The following account of its manners while incubating is from Dr. T. M. BREWER:—"There are few of our Sparrows that employ a greater variety of artifice to decoy their chief enemy, man, from the young or eggs. The situation of the nest, which is usually placed on the ground in dry sandy fields, without the least pains at concealment, renders stratagem peculiarly necessary to this bird. In a morning of May, 1836, as I was crossing a dry sandy field, I almost trod upon a female of this species, as she was sitting on her nest. She was exactly the colour of the surrounding soil, and was therefore unperceived by me, and another step would have inevitably brought me upon her, when she tumbled forward and imitated lameness so perfectly, that it was with the utmost difficulty I could prevent myself from being deceived and following her. The stratagem, however, was of no avail: I stopped, examined the eggs, which were four in number, and left them. The following morning I again visited the spot, but this time the stratagem was different. She left her nest, flew to a spot several rods distant, and manifested the greatest anxiety about the place on which she alighted, so that a stranger, not seeing her flight, would have supposed her nest to be at quite a distance from its real location. Finding this trick also unavailing, and seeing me stoop and examine her treasures, she speedily approached, and began making the most piteous lamentations, which she continued until I was at a considerable distance from her nest. The next morning I made her another visit, and again she varied her artifice, by leaving her nest, while I was at a greater distance than on either of my other visits, and flying into concealment as speedily as possible, evidently in hopes her flight would not be noticed. To how great a number and variety she would have carried her stratagems I am unable to say, for on visiting the spot on the fourth day, I was sorry to find the nest empty and deserted. Was this bird guided by instinct or by reason? The egg measures seven-eighths of an inch in length, and eleven-sixteenths in breadth, and is of a bluish-white, covered nearly equally with blotches of a reddish-brown colour. They are not always exactly uniform in colour and markings, but sufficiently so to be readily recognised. They resemble not a little the eggs of *Fringilla maritima* and *F. palustris*, but are distinguishable from both. They are also sometimes marked with hair-lines of a dark brown colour, irregularly scattered over the whole egg."

Having drawn the figure which you will see on referring to the plate, near the sea-shores of New Jersey, where the bird which it represents was shot while walking among little groups of the plant there vulgarly called the *prickly pear*, I have represented it also. It shoots up its fleshy stems from among the driest sand, and there flourishes in the greatest perfection and abundance. The flower is destitute of scent, but the fruit is agreeably acid, and is often eaten by children. I have observed a plant of the same genus about the sterile cliffs of the Kentucky river, and in particular near the town of Frankfort, as well as in Louisiana, on Alexander's creek, at which place it grows to a great size. This is probably a distinct species. I have not observed *cactuses* growing in a wild state in any other part of the Union.

From Texas to the Columbia river and Fur Countries. Breeds from Maryland eastward and northward. Resident in winter from Carolina southward and westward. Extremely abundant.

BAY-WINGED BUNTING, *Emberiza graminea*, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. iv. p. 51.

FRINGILLA GRAMINEA, Bonap. Syn., p. 108.

FRINGILLA (ZONOTRICHIA) GRAMINEA, *Bay-winged Finch*, Swains. and Rich. F. Bor. Amer., vol. ii. p. 254.

BAY-WINGED OR GRASS FINCH, *Fringilla graminea*, Nutt. Man., vol. i. p. 482.

GRASS FINCH OR BAY-WINGED BUNTING, *Fringilla graminea*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. i. p. 473; vol. v. p. 502.

Adult Male.

Bill shortish, robust, conical, acute; upper mandible broader than the lower, slightly declinate at the tip, the edges of both mandibles straight to near the base, where they are a little deflected. Nostrils basal, roundish, open, partially concealed by the feathers. Head rather large. Neck short. Body robust. Legs of moderate length, slender; tarsus of the same length as the middle toe, covered anteriorly with a longitudinal plate above, and a few transverse scuta below; toes scutate above, free, the lateral ones nearly equal; claws slender, arched, compressed, acute, that of the hind toe largest.

Plumage ordinary, compact. Wings of ordinary length, third and fourth quills longest, first and second little shorter. Tail longish, nearly equal, or slightly forked.

Bill dark brown on the back of the upper mandible, pale on the sides and below. Iris hazel. Tarsi, toes, and claws flesh-colour. The general colour of the upper parts is light brown, streaked and mottled with darker. Lesser wing-coverts bright reddish-brown or bay, the larger deep brown, edged with pale brown; quills also deep brown, the first margined externally with white. Tail-feathers dark brown, the outer marked with an oblique band of white, including the outer web and part of the inner towards the tip, the next

three margined externally with white, changing into pale brown on the other. A narrow circle of white around the eye. Throat and breast yellowish-white, the latter and the fore part of the cheeks streaked with dark brown. Sides and abdomen very pale yellowish-brown, the former sparsely streaked with dark brown; the posterior abdominal region and under tail-coverts white.

There is no perceptible difference as to colour or size between the male and the female.

Length $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches, extent of wings 10; bill $\frac{1}{3}$ along the ridge, $\frac{1}{2}$ along the gap.

THE PRICKLY PEAR, OR INDIAN FIG.

CACTUS OPUNTIA, *Willd.*, Sp. Pl., vol. ii. p. 943. *Pursch*, Fl. Amer., p. 323.—ICOSANDRIA MONOGYNIA, *Linn.*—CACTI, *Juss.*

This species has an articulated fleshy stem, with ovate, compressed joints, sparsely covered with setaceous prickles; large yellow flowers, and red, acidulous, eatable berries. It flowers in June and July, and grows in sandy fields and dry barren soil.

SAVANNAH BUNTING.

† EMBERIZA SAVANNA, *Wils.*

PLATE CLX.—MALE AND FEMALE.

This species is one of the most abundant of our Finches. It is also one of the hardiest, standing the winter of our Middle Districts, ranging as far north as Labrador, and crowding our old fields and open woods of the south from October to April. It is nearly allied to the Yellow-Winged Sparrow and Henslow's Bunting, but differs from both in many important particulars.

It confines itself principally to the ground, where it runs with extreme agility, lowering its body as if to evade your view, and when in danger hiding as closely as a mouse; nay, seldom taking to wing, unless much alarmed or suddenly surprised. It is fondest of dry, rather elevated situations,

A.T.

Bay-winged Bunting.

Male.

Rocky Pear Cactus *Opuntia*

Audubon, John James. 1841. "Bay-Winged Bunting, *Emberiza graminea*, Gmel. [Pl. 159]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 3, 65–68. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319272>.

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