group of these birds, is found growing abundantly in the country where the birds occur. It is a small shrub, the fruit of which is yellow when ripe, and excellent eating.

From Texas to North Carolina, and up the Mississippi to Natchez. Abundant. Migratory.

PAINTED BUNTING, *Emberiza Ciris*, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. iii. p. 68.

FRINGILLA CIRIS, Bonap. Syn., p. 107.

PAINTED BUNTING, Nutt. Man., vol. i. p. 477.

PAINTED FINCH, *Fringilla Ciris*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. i. p. 279; vol. v. p. 517.

Adult Male, in full plumage.

Bill short, robust, conical, somewhat bulging, straight, acute; upper mandible broader, slightly declinate at the tip; gap-line a little declinate at the base. Nostrils basal, roundish, partly concealed by the frontal feathers. Head and neck rather large. Body full. Feet of moderate length; tarsus a little longer than the middle toe; toes free, the lateral ones nearly equal; claws compressed, arched, acute.

Plumage blended, tufty, somewhat compact on the head and back. Wings of ordinary length, the third quill longest. Tail shortish, even, of twelve rounded feathers.

INDIGO BUNTING.

+ *SPIZA CYANEA*, Wils.

PLATE CLXX.—MALE, FEMALE, AND YOUNG.

The species here presented for inspection is best known to the Creoles of Louisiana by the name of *Petit Papebleu*. This is in accordance with the general practice of the first settlers of that State, who named all the Finches, Buntings, and Orioles, *Papes*; and all the Warblers and Fly-catchers, *Grassets*. They made an exception, however, in favour of the Rice-bird, which they honoured with the name of *Ortolan*, an appellation given in the Island of St. Domingo to the Ground Dove, which, however, is seldom seen near New Orleans.

Indigo Bunting.

1. 2. 3. Males in different States of Plumage. 4. Female.

Wild Sarsaparilla

The Indigo-bird arrives in the Southern States from the direction of Mexico, along with its relative the Painted Finch, and is caught in trap-cages, but with more difficulty than the latter bird. It spreads far and wide over the United States, extending from the borders of our Atlantic shores to those of our great lakes. It is not a forest bird, but prefers the skirts of the woods, the little detached thickets in and along the fields, the meadows, the gardens, and orchards, and is frequently seen hopping along, or perched on a fence, from which it does not disdain to send forth its pretty little song. The highest top of a detached tree is, however, preferred for this purpose, and the Indigo-bird is to be observed perched on this pinnacle, singing at short intervals for half an hour at a time. Its song is at first loud and clear, falling in cadences to a very low key. The whole consists of eight or ten notes. The bird now and then launches into the air, to cross a field, and sings until it has espied a favourite spot amongst the clover, when it immediately becomes silent and dives to the ground. The whole of this parade is performed by the male, which is alone to be seen, the female at this season keeping amongst the grass or the briars along the fields, where her humble plumage hides her in a great measure from observation. Some persons have thought that this practice was changed towards the latter part of summer, when, by a casual observer, only the females are to be seen. The true reason of this, however, is, that the young birds of both sexes resemble the mother during the first season.

The Indigo-bird is an active and lively little fellow, possesses much elegance in his shape, and also a certain degree of firmness in his make, which renders him equally a favourite with the Painted Finch, although he does not possess the variegated plumage of the latter. When the male of the species now before you is in full plumage, the richness of his apparel cannot fail to attract and please the eye of any observer. It is highly glossy, and changes from the brightest azure to green, when placed in a strong light. It requires three years to attain this perfect state. The female continues in the same very humble vesture which nature first accorded to her. The males, in the first spring, and not unfrequently during the first autumn, are mottled with dull light blue, interspersed among the original deep buff of their earlier stage. The blue increases in extent, and acquires a deeper tint, as the age of the bird advances. I have often seen males two years old which were still much inferior in the beauty of their plumage to those which had passed through three springs. Should the birds be caught when in full plumage, they gradually lose their brilliant tints, which at length become extremely dull. A similar alteration is observed to take place in Painted Finches which have been kept in cages for a certain period, as well as in the

Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, and in the Bulfinch, Chaffinch, and other European birds.

The nest of the Indigo-bird is usually fixed amongst the rankest stalks of weeds or grass, now and then amongst the stems of a briar, or even in a small hollow in a decayed tree. In all cases its composition is the same; but when amongst grass, clover, or briars, it is attached to two or three of the stalks by its sides. It is formed of coarse grasses, hemp stalks, and flax, and is lined with slender grasses. The female lays from four to six eggs, which are blue, with a spot or two of purple at the larger end.

Towards fall, the young congregate into loose flocks or parties of eight or ten individuals, and proceed southward. I think their migration, at both periods of the year, is performed during night. Two broods are generally raised in a season. The food of the Indigo-bird consists of small seeds of various kinds, as well as insects, some of which it occasionally pursues on wing with great vigour. They are fond of basking and rolling themselves in the roads, from which they gather small particles of sand or gravel. I have frequently seen live birds of this species offered for sale in Europe.

I have represented an adult female, two young males of the first and second year, in autumn, and a male in the full beauty of its plumage. They are placed on a plant usually called the *wild sarsaparilla*. It grows in Louisiana, on the skirts of the forests, in low damp places, and along the fields, where the Indigo-birds are to be found. It is a creeping plant, and is considered valuable on account of its medicinal properties.

I observed this species breeding in the Texas late in April, and it would appear from a note sent by my friend Dr. T. M. BREWER of Boston, that it reaches the neighbourhood of that city early in June, but does not commence its nest there until the latter part of that month, or early in July. He further states that it "is abundant near Boston, and when it arrives in spring generally chooses the highest chimney-tops to alight upon. They appear much attached to particular districts. A pair has now for five years in succession built in my father's garden, but this year, something would seem to have befallen them, for they have not made their appearance. One year they raised a second brood. This is the only instance in which I have known them to do so. The nest is usually placed in a bush or low tree, about three feet from the ground, and with us has uniformly been built of Russia matting, purloined from our grape-vines, lined with fine grass and hair. The eggs, four in number, are eleven-sixteenths of an inch in length, seven-sixteenths in breadth, and of a uniform white colour, without the slightest blotch or mark. I have never met with an egg having this purple blotch at the larger end, which you and WILSON mention as existing there,

although my observations are taken from the contents of more than eight nests. The second brood spoken of above was hatched in September."

I have before me at this moment an egg of the Indigo-bird procured by myself, which has several dots toward the larger end, and of which the general colour is not pure white, but, as described by NUTTALL, greenish-white, or rather, as I would call it, lightish-blue.

Distributed throughout the United States during summer. Abundant. Migratory.

INDIGO-BIRD, *Fringilla cyanea*, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. i. p. 100.

FRINGILLA CYANEA, Bonap. Syn., p. 107.

INDIGO-BIRD, Nutt. Man., vol. i. p. 473.

INDIGO-BIRD, *Fringilla cyanea*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. i. p. 377; vol. v. p. 503.

Male in full plumage.

Bill short, robust, conical, a little bulging, straight, acute; upper mandible broader, slightly declinate at the tip; gap-line a little declinate at the base. Nostrils basal, roundish, partially concealed by the frontal feathers. Head rather large. Neck of ordinary size. Body ovate. Feet of ordinary length, rather slender; tarsus covered anteriorly with a few scutella, the uppermost long, posteriorly edged; toes free, scutellate above; claws slender, compressed, arched, acute.

Plumage glossy, somewhat silky, blended. Wings of ordinary length, the second and third quills longest. Tail of ordinary length, distinctly emarginate, of twelve obtuse feathers.

Bill brownish-black, light blue beneath. Iris dark brown. Feet yellowish-brown. The general colour is a rich sky-blue, deeper on the head, lighter beneath, and in certain lights changing to verdigris-green. The quills, larger wing-coverts, and tail-feathers dark brown, margined externally with blue.

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

Male in the second year.

Bill lighter, irides and feet as in the adult. Head, neck and body, blue, but of a lighter tint; tail as in the adult; wings, including the lesser coverts, dull brown, the secondary coverts and some of the quills margined with blue.

Male in the first autumn.

Bill, irides and feet as in the last. Head and body of a lighter and duller blue, interspersed with brown patches; wings brown, secondary coverts tipped with whitish.

Adult Female.

Indigo Bunting.

1. 2. 3. Males in different States of Plumage. 4. Female.

Wild Sarsaparilla

Audubon, John James. 1841. "Indigo Bunting, *Spiza cyanea*, Wils. [Pl. 170]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 3, 96–99. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319283>.

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