

SCARLET TANAGER, OR BLACK-WINGED RED-BIRD.

†PYRANGA RUBRA, *Linn.*

PLATE CCIX.—MALE AND FEMALE.

You have now before you a representation of one of the most richly coloured of our birds, and one whose history is in some degree peculiar. The Scarlet Tanager enters the United States from Mexico, through the Texas, in the beginning of April. On several of the islands in the Gulf of Mexico, I found it exceedingly abundant, and restrained in a great measure from proceeding eastward by the weather, which was unseasonably cold. Many were procured in their full dress, and a few in the garb of the females. These plain-coloured individuals turned out to be males, which in so far confirmed my former observations respecting this and several other species, in which the males precede the females by about a fortnight in their spring migrations. It was at the same period that I observed the wonderful rapidity in the change of the plumage from its winter aspect to its summer colouring in the Red-breasted Snipe, *Scolopax Noveboracensis*; and I became convinced that nearly the same phenomenon took place in the Tanagers. In them, in fact, the older individuals, being stronger, had attained their full colouring, while the younger were later in changing. As we advanced, I procured many specimens partially coloured, and when the males had mostly passed, the females made their appearance; manifesting similar gradations in the changes of their colours. I knew that many of the males of this species reach our Middle Districts in a spotted dress, and soon after acquire their full colours; and I am disposed to think that in the autumnal months, the young males of the year become of a much purer tint than that of the young or old females. The latter themselves improve materially in this respect as they advance in age, and I have some nearly twice as richly coloured as birds only a year old. The same observations apply to our Summer Red-bird, *Tanagra æstiva*, of which I have females, procured by my valued friend EDWARD HARRIS, Esq., exhibiting tints nearly as bright as those of their mates obtained at the same time, when they had nests. In the Scarlet Tanager it is remarkable, moreover, that some males acquire a beautiful transverse band of glowing red on the smaller wing-coverts; and I have several specimens in this state, presented to me by Mr. HARRIS and Dr. TRUDEAU.

The Scarlet Tanager proceeds as far northward as Lake Huron, where it



Scarlet Tanager.

1. Male 2. Female

was observed by Dr. RICHARDSON; but this must happen rarely, as it is very sensible to cold, so much so indeed, that in the State of Massachusetts, should a sudden change take place in the weather, during the time of their spring migrations, hundreds die in the course of a night, not only in the woods and orchards, but even in the towns and villages. I witnessed a like occurrence at Eastport in Maine late in May, when I was on my way to Labrador; and as I was proceeding to the Texas, I observed that they sought the shelter of the low bushes, when the weather was damp or chill. None were seen after we left the former place, though they are at times found breeding in the British provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. In the United States they seem extremely partial to certain districts, generally preferring sandy soils and undulating grounds. Thus, I found them breeding abundantly in Louisiana, but rarely there in the lower parts. My friend Dr. BACHMAN informs me that they are seldom met with in the maritime districts of South Carolina; and that there they follow the mountain range as it were for a guide. Yet they are plentiful in the Jerseys, where they usually arrive about the middle of May, in Kentucky, and along the Missouri; and, in short, are generally dispersed over the Union.

The migrations of this species are performed by night. Its flight on ordinary occasions is even and swift, and it passes through the woods in a gliding manner, when the glowing colours of the males render them as conspicuous as pleasing to the sight. On the branches their movements are rather sedate, and it is but seldom that they emit their usual notes when in motion. These are by no means musical, although oft repeated. They have been well imitated by WILSON, who represents them by the syllables "*chip, churr.*" I have not, however, thought them pensive in any degree, but rather lively; and when emitting them, the bird often inflates his throat, stands erect, and vibrates his body, as if in perfect ecstasy.

It is by no means true, as authors allege, that the Scarlet Tanager retires from the sight of man, and prefers the deepest recesses of the forest to the neighbourhood of the husbandman's cottage; at least, this is not the case in those parts of our country where the population is not very dense; for I have observed it to take up its abode for a season in the very vicinity of the squatter's cabin, to the patch of open ground near which it constantly resorted to search for coleoptera and other insects, forming its slightly-built nest on the lower branch of a spreading oak, or on a tree close to the roadside. It is composed externally of a few dry weeds and small twigs, and scantily lined with fibrous roots or slender grasses. In Louisiana the eggs are deposited by the first of May, about a month later in our central districts, but in the State of Maine frequently not until the middle of June. It never raises more than one brood in the season; and I have observed that,

notwithstanding the difference in the temperature of our Southern and Northern States, the young are no sooner able to travel than they are at once led off, so that families may be seen travelling southward for many weeks in succession, and by the end of September all have left the United States. The eggs are from three to five, smooth, of a dull greenish-blue colour, speckled with reddish-brown and light purple, and measure a little more than seven-eighths of an inch in length, by five-eighths in breadth. The young are fed with insects and fruits of many sorts. At this period the old birds feed also on insects and larvæ, but toward the latter period of their stay they all subsist chiefly on the smaller berries and grapes.

The parental affection of this bird has been so beautifully and truly described by WILSON, that, in presenting the following statement regarding it, I must contribute to the gratification of your kindly feelings as much as of my own. "Passing through an orchard one morning, I caught one of the young birds that had but lately left the nest. I carried it with me about half a mile, to shew it to my friend, Mr. WILLIAM BARTRAM; and, having procured a cage, hung it upon one of the large pine trees in the Botanic Garden, within a few feet of the nest of an Orchard Oriole, which also contained young; hopeful that the charity or tenderness of the Orioles would induce them to supply the cravings of the stranger. But charity with them, as with too many of the human race, began and ended at home. The poor orphan was altogether neglected, notwithstanding its plaintive cries; and, as it refused to be fed by me, I was about to return it back to the place where I found it, when, towards the afternoon, a Scarlet Tanager, no doubt its own parent, was seen fluttering round the cage, endeavouring to get in. Finding this impracticable, he flew off, and soon returned with food in his bill; and continued to feed it till after sunset, taking up his lodgings on the higher branches of the same tree. In the morning, almost as soon as day broke, he was again seen most actively engaged in the same affectionate manner; and, notwithstanding the insolence of the Orioles, continued his benevolent offices the whole day, roosting at night as before. On the third or fourth day, he appeared extremely solicitous for the liberation of his charge, using every expression of distressful anxiety, and every call and invitation that nature had put in his power, for him to come out. This was too much for the feelings of my venerable friend; he procured a ladder, and, mounting to the spot where the bird was suspended, opened the cage, took out the prisoner, and restored him to liberty and to his parent, who, with notes of great exultation, accompanied his flight to the woods. The happiness of my good friend was scarcely less complete, and shewed itself in his benevolent countenance; and I could not refrain saying to myself,—If such sweet sensations can be derived from a single circumstance of this kind, how exquisite—how

unspeakably rapturous—must the delight of those individuals have been, who have rescued their fellow beings from death, chains, and imprisonment, and restored them to the arms of their friends and relations! Surely in such godlike actions, virtue is its own most abundant reward.”

Male, 7, $11\frac{3}{4}$. Female, $6\frac{1}{2}$, $10\frac{3}{4}$.

From Texas to Lake Huron. Throughout the Valley of the Mississippi, Kentucky, and Ohio. Common. Migratory.

SCARLET TANAGER, *Tanagra rubra*, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. ii. p. 42.

TANAGRA RUBRA, Bonap. Syn., p. 105.

SCARLET TANAGER, OR BLACK-WINGED SUMMER RED-BIRD, Swains. and Rich., F. Bor. Amer., vol. ii. p. 273.

SCARLET TANAGER, *Tanagra rubra*, Nutt. Man., vol. i. p. 465.

SCARLET TANAGER, *Tanagra rubra*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. iv. p. 388.

Adult Male in Spring.

Bill rather short, robust, compressed toward the end, acute. Upper mandible with its dorsal outline declinate and slightly convex, the ridge rather narrow, the sides convex, the edges sharp, overlapping, with two slightly prominent small festoons about the middle, and a faint notch close to the tip, which is a little declinate. Lower mandible strong, with the angle short and wide, the dorsal line straight, the back broadly convex, the sides convex, the edges sharp, the tip acute. Nostrils round, basal.

Head rather large, ovate, flattish above; neck very short; body ovate, compact. Legs shortish; tarsus short, compressed, rather stout, with seven anterior scutella, and two lateral plates forming an acute edge behind; toes of moderate length; middle toe longer than the tarsus, lateral toes much shorter and equal, hind toe stout. Claws rather large, arched, much compressed, acute.

Plumage soft and blended; very small bristles at the base of the upper mandible. Wings of ordinary length, the second quill longest, the first four having the outer web attenuated toward the end; secondaries slightly emarginate. Tail rather long, straight, emarginate, of twelve feathers.

Bill dull greenish-yellow, brown above. Iris hazel. Feet greyish-blue, claws greyish-yellow. The general colour of the plumage is pure scarlet; the wings and tail black; the axillar feathers, inner lower wing-coverts, and more or less of the inner webs of nearly all the quills, white.

Length to end of tail 7 inches, to end of wings $5\frac{3}{4}$, to end of claws $6\frac{3}{8}$; extent of wings $11\frac{3}{4}$; wing from flexure $4\frac{1}{12}$; tail $2\frac{10}{12}$; bill along the ridge $\frac{7\frac{1}{2}}{12}$, along the edge of lower mandible $\frac{10}{12}$; tarsus $\frac{9}{12}$; hind toe $\frac{4\frac{1}{2}}{12}$, its claw $\frac{3\frac{1}{2}}{12}$; middle toe $\frac{7\frac{1}{2}}{12}$, its claw $\frac{4\frac{1}{2}}{12}$.

Adult Female.

Bill and feet as in the male. The general colour of the upper parts is yellowish-green, tinged with grey, of the lower parts greenish-yellow; the feathers of the wings and tail greyish-brown, margined with yellowish-green, the secondaries and tail-feathers narrowly tipped with greyish-white, the lower wing-coverts and the edges of all the quills white.

Length to end of tail $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches, to end of wings $5\frac{3}{4}$, to end of claws $6\frac{1}{4}$; extent of wings $10\frac{3}{4}$.

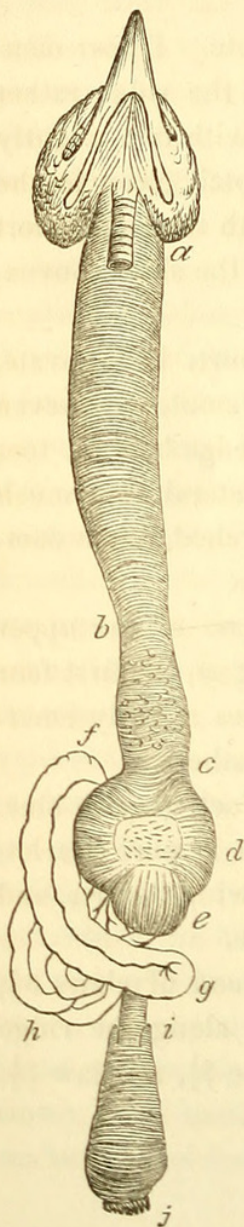
The young when fledged resemble the female; the males being, however, distinguishable from the females by their brighter tints.

The young male in autumn, after the first moult, has the lower parts of a much brighter yellow, the upper of a lighter green, but with all the feathers having a central black mark, those on the head oblong, on the middle of the back broad, on the rump linear. The wing-coverts are black; the quills and tail-feathers brownish-black, margined with yellowish-green.

Two males in my possession, shot by Dr. TRUDEAU, are remarkable for having the first row of small coverts scarlet, forming a conspicuous band amidst the black of the wing, and the lower wing-coverts tipped and margined with the same. In all other respects, however, these individuals agree with the others.

An adult male examined. The roof of the mouth is concave, with a median prominent ridge and two more prominent lateral ridges, between which and the edges is a broad groove for the reception of the lower mandible. The tongue is 6 twelfths long, deeply emarginate and papillate at the base, flat above, with a median groove, the tip horny and pointed, but terminated by several flattened bristles or shreds. Œsophagus, *a b c*, $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, its diameter $4\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths, until its entrance into the thorax, when it contracts a little. Proventriculus, *b c*, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths in diameter. The stomach, *c d e*, is a strong gizzard, 8 twelfths long, 7 twelfths in breadth, its lateral muscles moderately thick; the epithelium rugous and dark reddish-brown. Intestine, *f g h*, $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, its average diameter $2\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths, its narrowest part 2 twelfths. The rectum *i j*, 10 twelfths long; the cœca, *i*, $\frac{3}{4}$ of a twelfth long, and $\frac{1}{2}$ twelfth in diameter.

The trachea is 2 inches long, its diameter $1\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths, and nearly uniform; the rings about 60. The contractor and sterno-tracheal muscles are slender; and there are four pairs of inferior laryngeal.



In a female the intestine is $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches long.

The contents of the stomach in both were remains of insects and seeds.

The digestive organs of this bird, and probably of all the Tanagers of the same group, are thus not essentially different from those of the Passerine tribe, including Finches, Buntings, &c. The œsophagus has a more elongated dilatation than in most of the species of that tribe, of which, however, the Corn Bunting of Europe is very similar in this respect.

LOUISIANA TANAGER.

†PYRANGA LUDOVICIANA, *Wils.*

PLATE CCX.—MALE AND FEMALE.

WILSON was the first ornithologist who figured this handsome bird. From his time until the return of Mr. TOWNSEND from the Columbia river no specimen seems to have been procured. That gentleman forwarded several males in much finer condition than those brought by LEWIS and CLARKE. Some of these I purchased, and, on his return to Philadelphia, I was presented with a female by my young friend Dr. TRUDEAU. The account of this species is by THOMAS NUTTALL, who, however, was unacquainted with the female.

“We first observed this fine bird in a thick belt of wood near Lorimer’s Fork of the Platte, on the 4th of June, at a considerable distance to the east of the first chain of the Rocky Mountains (or Black Hills), so that the species in all probability continues some distance down the Platte. We have also seen them very abundant in the spring, in the forests of the Columbia, below Fort Vancouver. On the Platte they appeared shy and almost silent, not having there apparently commenced breeding. About the middle of May we observed the males in small numbers scattered through the dark pine forests of the Columbia, restless, shy, and flitting when approached, but at length more sedentary when mated. We frequently traced them out by their song, which is a loud, short, slow, but pleasing warble, not much unlike the song of the Common Robin, delivered from the tops of the lofty fir-trees. This music continues at short intervals through-



Scarlet Tanager.

1. Male 2. Female



Audubon, John James. 1841. "Scarlet Tanager, or Black-Winged Red-Bird, *Pyrranga rubra*, Linn. [Pl. 209]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 3, 226–231. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319322>.

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