

## DESCRIPTIONS OF A NEW WARBLER AND A NEW SONG SPARROW.

BY WILLIAM BREWSTER.

ON examining the large series of Parula Warblers contained in the United States National Museum and in my own collection—in all upwards of two hundred specimens—I find that the birds which breed in the lowlands of our Southern States differ so appreciably from those which pass their summers at the North as to make it desirable to separate the two subspecifically. The southern form has first claim to the name *americana*, for Catesby's excellent plate and description of "*Parus fringillaris*" (Nat. Hist. Car., etc. I, 1731, p. 64), on which Linnæus based his *Parus americanus* (Sys. Nat., I, 1758, p. 190), were unmistakably taken from a southern bird. As no one of the other names which have been applied to the species at large seems to be clearly available for the northern form,<sup>1</sup> I propose to call the latter

### **Compsothlypis americana usneæ,<sup>2</sup> new subspecies. NORTH- ERN PARULA WARBLER.**

*Type*, ♂ ad., No. 5392, Collection of W. Brewster, Lake Umbagog, Maine, May 14, 1881; W. Brewster.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ficedula ludoviciana* Briss. (Orn. III, 1760, p. 500, pl. 26), *Motacilla ludoviciana* Gmel. (Sys. Nat. I, 1788, p. 983, based on Brisson) and *Motacilla eques* Boddaert (Planches Enlum., 1783, pl. 731, fig. 1, 709 fig. 1) all relate exclusively to the southern bird. *Sylvia torquata* Vieill. (Ois. Am. Sept., II, 1807, p. 38, pl. 99) is in some doubt inasmuch as "New York" is mentioned in connection with its range, but the accompanying description, as far as it can be identified, applies to the southern form. *Sylvia pusilla* Wils. (Am. Orn. IV, 1811, p. 17, pl. 28) is preoccupied in Latham's 'Index Ornithologicus,' Supplement, II, 1801, p. 56, by *Sylvia pusilla* = *Acanthiza pusilla* Vigors, an Australian bird belonging to the family *Timeliidæ*.

<sup>2</sup> This bird usually, if not invariably, builds its nest in or of the *Usnea* 'moss,' while its southern representative, the true *C. americana*, is almost equally addicted to nesting in the Spanish moss (*Tillandsia*).



## COMPARATIVE DIAGNOSES.

**Compsothlypis americana.**—Averaging slightly smaller but with a longer bill. Adult male with more yellow on the under parts and less black or blackish on the lores and malar region; the dark collar across the jugulum narrow, obscure, often nearly wanting; the chest pale, diffuse russet, without obvious markings.

**Breeding Range.**—The South Atlantic and Gulf States east of Texas, northward near the Atlantic Coast to the District of Columbia, and in the interior to Mt. Carmel, Illinois.

**C. a. usneæ.**—Averaging slightly larger but with a shorter bill. Adult male with less yellow on the under parts and more black or blackish on the lores and malar region; the dark collar across the jugulum black or blackish, broad and conspicuous; the chest mottled or spotted with rich brownish chestnut.

**Breeding Range.**—New England, New York, and westward along the northern tier of States, northward into the Maritime Provinces and Canada.

Although the characters just pointed out are all, apparently, of greater or less diagnostic value, no one of them, unfortunately, is quite constant. The most reliable distinction is that of the depth and definition of the reddish brown on the chest. With both forms the feathers of this part have brown centres and yellow margins, but in *americana* the brown is so pale and suffused with yellowish that the whole area over which it is distributed appears nearly uniform in tone, whereas in *usneæ* the brown is so rich and red (approaching chestnut in many birds) that it contrasts strongly with the yellow by which it is bordered, and gives the plumage the appearance of being rather distinctly mottled or spotted. This difference is almost as pronounced in young males in autumn as in old birds in breeding plumage. A still more striking character is to be found in the relative depth and extent of the dark collar on the jugulum, but while in fully seventy-five per cent of my specimens of *usneæ* this collar is much broader and blacker than in any of the examples of *americana*, a few spring males of the former have it but poorly defined or even practically wanting. Such birds are probably immature. With some of them the yellow of the under parts is quite as extended as in typical *americana*, but as a rule *usneæ* has much the less yellow of the two, especially on the throat. It is difficult to separate females of the two forms save by the difference in size, and in the shape and pro-



portions of the bill, but the female of *americana* is usually yellower beneath than that of *usneæ* and much more rarely shows any distinct traces of blackish on the jugulum.

It is probable that in the main the breeding range of *C. americana* is confined within the low parts of the South where the Spanish moss (*Tillandsia*) flourishes, and that *C. a. usneæ* is to be found in summer only where the 'Old Man's beard' (*Usnea*) grows, but the summer distribution of the northern bird is evidently not fully co-extensive with the distribution of its favorite 'moss,' and the southern form passes somewhat beyond the northern limits of the *Tillandsia* region, for it is represented in my series by several apparently typical examples from Washington, D. C., and Mt. Carmel, Illinois. Unfortunately I have seen no summer birds from the regions immediately to the northward of these points, where, it may be assumed, the two forms approach each other more or less closely if they do not actually intermingle. That they sometimes intergrade is shown conclusively by five breeding males taken by Mr. Scott at Wytheville and Mountain Lake, Virginia, in June and July, 1889. In respect to color and markings these birds are about intermediate between *americana* and *usneæ*, but their bills are as large as in extreme specimens of the former. I have several other similar specimens collected during the migration in Florida.

**Melospiza fasciata merrilli**, new subspecies. MERRILL'S SONG SPARROW.

*Subspecific characters.*—Similar to *Melospiza fasciata guttata* but with the bill smaller, the ground color of the upper parts—including the sides of the head and neck—lighter and more ashy, the dark markings (especially those of the back) blacker and more sharply defined, the white of the under parts clearer and more extended.

*Type*, ♂ ad. (No. 46,026, Collection of W. Brewster, collector's No. 947) Fort Sherman, Idaho, March 6, 1895; Dr. J. C. Merrill, U. S. A.

Length, "6.10"; wing, 2.63; tail, 2.58; tarsus, .84; length of culmen from feathers, .44; depth of bill at nostrils, .25.

In respect to the size and shape of the bill, the length of the tail, the character and definition of the dark markings of the breast, sides and back, and the extent of the white on the under parts,



this form, of which Dr. Merrill has sent me nine specimens from Fort Sherman, is apparently intermediate between *M. f. montana* and *M. f. guttata*. It differs from both, however, in the ground color of its upper parts which are generally of a dark but clear ashy brown very unlike the faded grayish brown of *montana* and with but little of the rich, dull rusty which suffuses the plumage of *guttata*. Of the thirteen specimens of *merrilli* one taken in autumn affords the nearest approach to *guttata*. The spring birds (some of which were collected in April and May) are all essentially similar to the type of *merrilli*.

Dr. Merrill writes me that this Song Sparrow breeds at Fort Sherman where he took four nests and sets of eggs in 1895.

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## THE TERNS OF MUSKEGET ISLAND, MASSACHUSETTS. PART II.

BY GEORGE H. MACKAY.<sup>1</sup>

REFERRING my readers to 'The Auk' for January, 1895, page 32, I now desire to put before them under the same title, some further data collected during the past summer. It had been my intention to visit Muskeget this year on the same dates as last, that comparisons might be better made of results. Had my purpose been carried out, which it was not, such would not have proved conclusive, for the reason that although the Terns arrived a week earlier than they did in 1894 and 1893, and ten days earlier than in 1892, they apparently did not commence to lay their eggs as early this season as last, for it was not until May 28, 1895, that the first two nests, each containing one egg, were discovered, notwithstanding Mr. Sandsbury had taken daily walks over Muskeget Island proper for this purpose, commencing on May 20. The first eggs noted in 1894 were found on May 21.

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<sup>1</sup> Read before the Nuttall Ornithological Club, October 21, 1895.



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