

These extracts confirm my views in reference to the existence of imperfect forms of *Vitis vinifera*, and they open up an interesting inquiry as to the cause of seedless raisins. One of our fellow members suggests that my hypothesis that they are pistillate forms, imperfectly developed through lack of fertilization, is unlikely, because, with so many vineyards of perfect grapes, at times some of these would get fertilized from stray pollen, and thus we should occasionally find seeds in dried corinths, which we do not. But old writers on the corinth say that berries with seeds are found at times amongst the others, in which case they are double the size (see Prince's Treatise on the Vine, pages 97, 98, copied probably from Duhamel). They are perhaps rejected when the currants are being prepared.

However, the object of my note was to refer to the *fact* of the existence of male plants; and the hypothesis in reference to the seedless grapes was introduced rather to stimulate inquiry as to what the facts really are in relation to their real nature and organization.

Description of an apparently new species of OWL, of the Genus SCOPS.

BY D. G. ELLIOT, F. L. S., F. Z. S., ETC.

SCOPS KENNICOTTII.

Head and upper parts light rufous-brown, each feather having a central streak of brownish-black, and also barred with the same color. The rufous-brown hue lightest on the lower part of the neck, where it is almost a buff. The outer feathers of the interscapulars have the outer webs light buff, forming a distinct bar. Wings same color as the back, but the central streak broader. Primaries dark brown, outer webs marked with distinct spots of light buff, slightly discernible on the inner. Secondaries blackish-brown, outer webs distinctly spotted with dark buff. Tertiaries mottled with light buff and black. Ear tufts light buff, with a central streak of black, and barred with the same; broadest on the outer webs. Feathers around the eye reddish-brown; those covering the nostrils soiled white, with black shafts. Concealed patches of white feathers equidistant between the ear-tufts and the ears. Upper part of breast light buff; several feathers on each side having very broad central streaks of black, forming together a conspicuous spot; the rest have this mark much narrower, and the black bars either nearly obsolete, or mere wavy lines. Feathers of the flanks light buff, with a broad line of black in the middle, and a conspicuous bar of pale yellowish-white near their tips. Centre of abdomen and under tail coverts yellowish-white, a few indistinct brown bars on the latter. Feathers of tarsi reddish-brown; of feet yellowish-white. Bill black, white at tip. Claws chestnut at base, rest black.

Total length 11 inches; wing $7\frac{1}{4}$ in., tail 4 in., bill $\frac{7}{8}$ in. along the curve, claws $\frac{1}{2}$ in.

Hab.—Sitka.

The general hue of this curious little owl is a reddish-brown, mottled and blotched with black. In size it is between the *Scops Asio* and *Otus Wilsonianus*, and is not unlike what a cross between these species might be supposed to resemble. It, however, bears very distinctive characters, which free it from any such suspicion, among which, and not the least, is the curious concealed tuft of white feathers just above the ears.

The specimen was procured at Sitka by the expedition engaged in laying the telegraph which is to connect the two great continents of America and Asia, and is one of the most interesting additions which the indefatigable naturalists attached to this band of zealous workers have made to the Avi fauna of North America.

The example from which my description is taken is unique, and belongs to the Academy of Natural Sciences of Chicago, by the kindness of whose officers

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I am enabled to bring this bird to the notice of ornithologists; and in my large work on the Birds of North America, now publishing, I propose to give a life-size portrait of this species.

In bestowing on this owl the name which I trust it is ever destined to bear, I simply express the desire which I am sure is felt by all ornithologists, to render honor to him who, combining the intrepidity of the explorer with the enthusiasm of the naturalist, twice penetrated the forbidding, cheerless districts of the far north, in order to extend the knowledge of his favorite science; and who perished in his early manhood, in the full tide of his usefulness, on the banks of the Yukon.

Ornithology has met no greater loss, in these later days, than in the death of Robert Kennicott.

A Study of the RAMPHASTIDÆ.

BY JOHN CASSIN.

Having been frequently interested, as well as greatly perplexed with the singularly nearly allied forms in this group, and having recently undertaken to study and label the large collections of the Philadelphia Academy and of the Smithsonian Institution, my memoranda have been readily expanded into this memoir. The collection of the Smithsonian Institution is mainly from Mexico and Central America, and contains numerous specimens of species previously known only as exceedingly rare and valuable. The collection of the Philadelphia Academy is quite extensive, and comprehensive also, containing about five-sixths of all known species, nearly the whole of which were presented by its most munificent and judicious patrons, Dr. Thomas B. Wilson, and Edward Wilson, Esq.

In this group, species do certainly exist which are very nearly related to each other, but I am not without a suspicion that the number has been unnecessarily increased, and that several so-called species should be regarded as varieties only, and in a few instances I doubt whether even that distinction is clearly tenable or permanent. In all cases, however, I give the species as I find them described. The splendid Monograph of this group by Mr. Gould renders the study of these birds comparatively easy; and, in very nearly all species, the figures are of the very first class in accuracy and faithfulness of representation.

I. Genus RAMPHASTOS, Linnæus.

Genus *Ramphastos*, Linn., *Syst. Nat.* i. p. 103 (1758).

Ramphastos, Aldrovandus, *Orn.* i. p. 801 (1599).

Ramphastes, Gesner, *Icon. Av.* p. 130 (1560).

1. *Ramphastos*.

1. *RAMPHASTOS TOCO*, Müller.

Ramphastos Toco, Müll., *Syst. Nat. Supp.* p. 80 (1776).

Ramphastos Toco, Gm., *Syst. Nat.* i. p. 356 (1788).

Ramphastos magnirostris, Swains., *Cab. Cy.* ii. p. 299 (1837).

Ramphastos niveus, Less., *Supp. Oeuv. Buff.*

Ramphastos picatus, Linn., *Syst. Nat.* i. p. 103 (1758)?

LeVaill. *Ois. Par.* pl. 2. *Buff. Pl. Enl.* 82. Gould, *Mon. Ramph.* 1st ed. pl. 6, 2d ed. pl. 1.

This large and well known species is regarded as the type of the genus *Ramphastos* by all modern authors, but as a matter of after as well as antecedent consideration, and especially for strict constructionists (of which I am one), it is worth remembering that, although the genus was established by Linnæus (or his editor Jussieu) as early as the fourth edition of *Syst. Nat.*, in 1744, this

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