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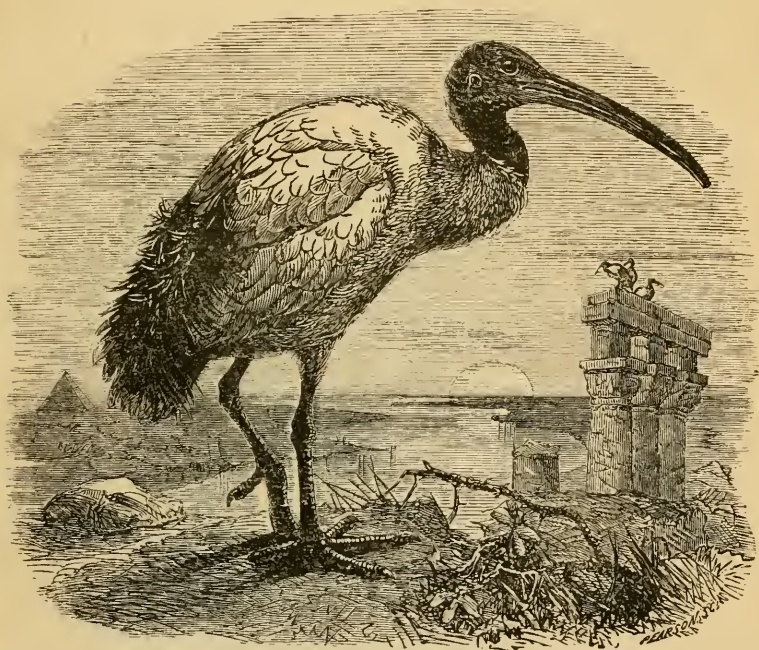
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XLIII.—*Further Notes on the Birds of the Canary Islands.*

By E. G. MEADE-WALDO.

(Plate XIII.)

I AM afraid that I have much less to relate of these islands, ornithologically, this time than in my previous papers, having recently explored only the little island of Hierro, which is but a small field, and Lanzarote, that resembles the worst parts (for birds) of Fuerteventura.

Tenerife was visited this spring on April 25th by a great influx of migrants; the oldest inhabitant had never seen anything like it. There was no gale of wind or anything to account for it, the migration being only preceded by two or three days of dull steamy heat. *Chelidon urbica* and *Hirundo rustica* were in thousands; *Cotile riparia* was very numerous. The Golden Oriole (*Oriolus galbula*) was in small parties of four or five individuals, frequenting the orange and loquat trees. When disturbed in these they would dart away into the tops of the tallest plane trees, where it was almost impossible to see them. A small dark form of the Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) was very numerous, as was also the Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*). The Pied Flycatcher (*Muscicapa atricapilla*) occurred at Laguna, as did also *Merops persica*; and Coots (*Fulica atra*) and Moorhens (*Gallinula chloropus*) were common. I have heard, since I left, that a gentleman at Tacaronte has some living Purple Gallinules (*Porphyrio*?) that were caught by the country-people at the same time. Red-footed Falcons (*Falco vespertinus*) were not uncommon, and were shamefully bullied by the Common Kestrels. Nearly all the common Waders were in large numbers, except the Knot; Curlew Sandpipers (*Tringa subarquata*) in nearly full breeding-plumage and Greenshanks (*Totanus glottis*) being especially numerous, and frequenting the tanks, *not* the shore. Common Herons were also exceedingly numerous and absurdly tame. By the 4th of May I do not think there was left a single example out of this vast number of birds, all having gone away on the night of the 3rd.

Don Anatael Cabrera has added to his interesting collection of birds killed in the neighbourhood of Laguna an example of *Ardetta sturmi* and several of *Porzana maruetta* and *Porzana parva*, which appear to be pretty regular winter visitors to the ditches round Laguna. I spent last summer in the Valle de Guerra, near Laguna, where the Barn Owl (*Strix flammæ*), which has generally been considered a scarce bird in the Canaries, was quite common, its shriek being heard every night. I once saw five on the wing together; they are all large and very dark-coloured birds here. I found in castings of this bird from a cave many more small bird-remains than is usual in this country, also remains of lizards. The Long-eared Owl (*Asio vulgaris*) I found to be exceedingly numerous on the lava-flows near the sea, where they inhabit the large candalabra-like *Euphorbia canariensis*, and prey principally on lizards; they breed on the ground in the centre of these practically impenetrable strongholds during the winter, for I procured a young one at the end of January this year, just able to fly. Many birds breed very irregularly in these islands, for in November last a little girl brought me a Thick-knee (*Ædicnemus crepitans*) still in the down. The distribution of the Shrike (*Lanius algeriensis*) in Tenerife is rather peculiar. It frequents the hot *Euphorbia*-covered slopes close to the sea on the south side of the island; it is almost equally common and resident all the year on the "Cumbre," 5000 to 7000 feet, and is seldom or never seen on the north or west of the island.

On the 19th of November, 1889, I went to Hierro, calling at Santa Cruz de la Palma on the way, and, as the steamer was obliged to wait all day, I got a mule and rode up to the mountain where I had procured the first Palma Tit (*Parus palmensis*). Very nearly in the same spot where I shot my first specimen I had the luck to shoot in a few minutes four beautiful examples. They came to a call which I always find very effective in bringing up small birds, viz. imitating the cry of a rabbit that a stoat or ferret has got hold of; all the small birds on hearing it come up and utter their alarm-notes. I also shot some Chaffinches (*Fringilla palmæ*). The young males

at this time of year are quite indistinguishable from young males of *F. tintillon*. We went on board that night, and called for a few minutes next morning at the beach below the Valle Hermoso, Gomera. This enabled me to have a glimpse of the Cordillera, where I had procured my first *Columba laurivora*. We then steamed slowly on and anchored off the Port of Valverde, Hierro, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. The Port of Hierro is very unpretentious; there is not even a beach, but here the precipices, which almost surround the island, are a little less steep. There is not a single house in sight, but there is a cave, in which what little business there may be on the weekly arrival of the mails is transacted. The delivery of the mails is unique in its way—the small mail-bag is opened on the beach, the correspondence handed round among the crowd, and anyone who sees a letter for himself, or for any of his acquaintances who may live near him in any part of the island, appropriates it or undertakes to deliver it. Nearly two hours' climb brought us to Valverde, the capital, a small straggling village, about 2000 feet above the sea. Hierro has no coast-town, the island being a high undulating tableland, surrounded by almost perpendicular precipices, excepting the valley of El Golfo, which, in a way, resembles the valley of Orotava on a small scale, except in that the mountain rises much nearer to the coast and is far steeper. Nothing much is grown in the valley except figs and tobacco, there being no water to irrigate the crops. As soon as it was known that I had come to look for birds, I was conducted to see a great rarity that had been caught a few days before, a Common Coot (*Fulica atra*). It seemed a strange bird to be introduced to on one's first arrival in this out-of-the-way little island. The man that we engaged as guide, and servant also, was anxious to procure for us specimens of the large lizard that inhabits the outer Zalmone Rock. After we had arranged to visit this spot, the dark-weather and heavy surf prevented any attempt at landing on it while we were in Hierro, but Canon Tristram, who came afterwards, was more successful. We started for El Pinal next day, passing through the centre of

the island, a high down-like tableland. Nearly all the birds of the Western Canaries are common here, the Common Linnet (*Linota cannabina*) and Berthelot's Pipit (*Anthus bertheloti*) being perhaps the most numerous; but Canaries, Corn Buntings, Goldfinches, and Rock Sparrows were nearly equally abundant. The Chiffchaff and Black-headed Warbler (*Sylvia melanocephala*) were common where there was suitable cover. The dark-coloured Kestrels were fairly common, but I do not think quite so much so as in the other Western islands. The Quail is not rare, but there is no Partridge in Hierro: they tell me it has been introduced from Gomera, but has died from want of water. The Thick-knee (*Ædicnemus crepitans*) is far from rare. The Buzzard (*Buteo vulgaris*) is fairly numerous in the Ladera of El Golfo, and the Red Kite (*Milvus ictinus*) is in about the same numbers.

We did not see the Neophron, neither is the name of "Quirre" known to the islanders, so I expect that if it visits Hierro, it is only occasional. It is common in Gomera, but unknown in Palma. Probably nowhere in the world is the Tangier Raven (*Corvus tingitanus*) more numerous than here; it is always in sight, flying in flocks, large and small, walking about close to one, and showing but little fear. They would come to our tent and greedily pick up the bodies of birds that had been skinned, and the pine-forest where our tent was pitched resembled a scattered rookery. The pairs in November frequently sat by their old nests and made most ridiculous noises, sometimes almost resembling a song. The peasants tell me (and I can quite believe it, for food for so many must be very hard to get) that the Ravens do them a great deal of harm, that they have great difficulty in saving their lambs from them (for in Hierro sheep take the place of the goats of the rest of the islands), that they are equally destructive amongst their crops, and that if it were not for the Ravens the island could support many more people.

The most interesting bird in Hierro is the Tit. I procured my first specimens soon after entering the pine-forest, and when looking for a camping-ground I shot three more, which at a glance I saw belonged to a new species. This

decided me in choosing what proved to be an excellent spot. This Tit, which in habits resembles *Parus palmensis*, lives apparently only in the pine-forest, occasionally wandering into the tree-heath; it has the voice of *Parus tenerifæ*, and also the style of that form, not standing so high on its legs, nor in the knock-kneed manner of the Palma Tit. It is the largest and strongest of all the Canarian Tits, and differs in having the *whole* of its back of a fine olive-green instead of blue, there being only a band of light blue at the back of the neck; the yellow of the breast is very rich in colour, and there is *never* a trace of white; the black line is very indistinct. It is quite a common bird in the pine-forest, and I had no trouble in procuring as many specimens as I wanted. I have described this bird as a new species, and named it *Parus ombriosus*, after "Ombrios," King Juba's name for the island of Hierro.

PARUS OMBRIOSUS. (Plate XIII.)

Parus ombriosus, Meade-Waldo, Ann. Mag. N. H. ser. 6, v. p. 103.

Parus tenerifæ similis, sed fortior et robustior: tergo toto olivacco-viridescente nec cæruleo: tectricibus alarum viridibus, majoribus angustissime albo terminatis: subtus citrinus, *P. tenerifæ* similis. *Femina* haud a mari distinguenda.

This Tit adds a fourth to the number of forms found in the Canary Islands, three of which are quite peculiar to the archipelago, and two are peculiar to their own islands. Fuerteventura and Lanzarote have *Parus ultramarinus*, almost indistinguishable from the mainland bird. Grand Canary, Tenerife, and Gomera have *Parus tenerifæ*, easily known from *P. ultramarinus* by its brighter colouring and in *never* having white-tipped wing-coverts. The island of Palma has *Parus palmensis*, distinguished by having its underparts *white* instead of yellow, the wing-coverts slightly tipped with white, and the tail and tarsi longer. It has also a differently pitched voice, which can be distinguished at once from the other Tits, and its more slender form and different style show it at once to belong to a different race. Besides it is confined to the pine-forest, only occasionally coming into

the laurels, and apparently never frequenting villages and gardens, as does *Parus tenerifæ* in the three islands which it frequents.

Parus ombriosus resembles *Parus tenerifæ* in all its ways, except that it lives only in the pine-forest, and occasionally in the tree-heaths and laurels.

In Hierro the Goldcrest (*Regulus tenerifæ*, Seebohm) is common in the pines and heath-forest. It is of the same form that is common to all the Canary Islands where Goldcrests exist, and has the black sides to the crest joined across the forehead, as in *R. ignicapillus*. It appears that some Goldcrests from other parts have the same feature, especially those from China, but in my large series from all the Canary Islands I find no variation in this respect.

The Chaffinch is not very numerous. It is intermediate between *Fringilla tintillon* and *F. palmæ*, having a little green over the tail, and the breast of a dirty, not pure, white, as in *F. palmæ*. Grand Canary, Tenerife, and Gomera have the same Chaffinch (*F. tintillon*), the *adult* male of which has a pure buff breast, a dark-slate back, and a green rump. La Palma has its Chaffinch, with *no* green on the rump and very little green on the wings, a white breast, and the slate-blue of the head is paler than in *F. tintillon*. It is interesting to note that in the three islands where the Chaffinch is the same the Tit is also the same, and where the Chaffinch is different, as in Palma, *both* have white breasts; this, however, does not apply to Hierro, where both are different. I noticed that in Palma *F. palmæ* ranged right through the pine-forest, as does *F. teydea* in Tenerife. A pair that we have in our aviary, on being given seeds of *Pinus canariensis* are as eager for them as *F. teydea*, while *F. tintillon*, in the same aviary, takes little or no notice of them.

The Robin of Hierro is the same as that of Palma, and has a pale-coloured breast; it is, however, much more generally distributed about the island than in the rest of the Canaries, and was common in the thickets of fig-trees in the town of Valverde; it was most remarkably shy.

There is no Laurel Pigeon in Hierro. At the first glance

the Ladera of El Golfo looks splendid ground for both *Columba bolli* and *C. laurivora*, but a short scramble about it shows that there is no food-plant, the "viñatigo," asiriña, "laurel," and til-tree being almost absent, and the forest consisting almost entirely of tree-heath and "haya," which, however, is the favourite nesting-tree of *C. bolli*. A man who was accustomed to shoot Rock Doves (*C. livia*) at a spring told me he had once seen two large Pigeons with red breasts, from which the Rock Doves fled: these may have been a pair of *C. laurivora* crossed over from Palma.

In the end of March of this year I paid a visit to the Eastern islands, accompanied by Canon Tristram. At Las Palmas, while waiting for the steamer that was to take us to Lanzarote, I saw several pairs and single males of the Trumpeter Bullfinch (*Erythrospiza githaginea*) close to the town, and at the back of the new hotel. I do not think that they have been recorded from any part of Grand Canary before, though Canon Tristram concluded that they would be found on the barren tract near Maspalomas Point.

After having thoroughly explored Fuerteventura, we did not find Lanzarote ornithologically interesting. This island is very carefully cultivated under most difficult circumstances, for there is hardly any water, only that which is caught in tanks after the very slight and uncertain rainfall. This year, however, the inhabitants had had abundant rain, enough, they told us, for ten years. They must be easily satisfied, for I thought the whole place, with the exception of the valley of Haría, had a most burnt-up appearance; they had, however, cultivated a splendid crop of onions, which long files of camels were bringing into the port of Arrecife for export to Cuba. The people of Lanzarote are remarkably industrious in comparison with the rest of the Canarians, and we found them obliging and kind throughout the island. The birds of Lanzarote appear to be, as would be expected, the same as those of Fuerteventura, with two differences. I do not believe that the Fuerteventura Chat (*Pratincola dacotie*) occurs there, we kept the most lively look-out in all the likely places and never saw one; while in Lanzarote exists

the Barbary Partridge (*Caccabis petrosa*), and there is no Partridge in Fuerteventura.

The Partridge in Lanzarote is confined to *one* lava-flow (that which flows from the Monte de Corona), and on that it is said to be fairly numerous. I only saw one, which I shot—a dingy-coloured male, that was not breeding. It has never spread to any other part of the island. No one knew if they had been introduced there or not, but it is almost the nearest point to the African coast, and the Partridge of Grand Canary is *C. rufa*.

The Quail appeared to be very numerous, and the Desert Short-toed Lark (*Calandrella minor*) swarmed everywhere; while Berthelot's Pipits, Common Linnets (which differed from those of Fuerteventura in being very bright instead of colourless), and Trumpeter Bullfinches were very common. The Ultramarine Tit was very local, and appeared to be confined to the Valley of Haría, where it was fairly numerous; those procured were small and pale in colour. We found a nest in a hole in the ground, and dug it out; it contained three young and one addled egg. We caught the old female, and kept her whilst we remade the nest, and arranged stones over it to prevent the earth falling in; on releasing her a little distance off, she went straight back and into the nest, notwithstanding the altered appearance it must have had to her. The Cream-coloured Courser is pretty numerous in suitable places, and I saw them in the fields, which I do not remember to have done in Fuerteventura; they were very tame from seeing many people, who never molest them. The Courser is not at all good meat. The Houbara is not really common, but there appear to be some on each suitable plain. There are great numbers of Waders on the shores, and at "Papagayo," the tiny village from which we took our boat to sail across to Fuerteventura, the Yellow-legged Herring Gull was absolutely tame, walking about among the children's legs and sitting on the tops of the houses. We saw them picking at food which the children were holding in their hands.

Our visit to the little islet of La Graciosa was not very

productive, as we were too early for the Petrels, which breed here in great numbers—the only early breeder that I am aware of being *Puffinus obscurus*, which lays at the end of February and beginning of March; none of the others seem to come to their holes before the end of May. La Graciosa is about three miles long by one and a half broad, and is flat, with three small extinct volcanoes on it; it is covered with a low scrubby bush, called by the people “salada mora.” The Petrels burrow at the foot of these bushes, their roots preventing the sand from filling in. We procured a pair of breeding Black Oyster-catchers (*Hæmatopus capensis*). They call them here “Corvino,” on Lanzarote “Grajo de mar,” and on Fuerteventura “Cuervo marino”—three different names on three adjoining islands. Shrikes were not uncommon here; they appear to be intermediate between *Lanius algeriensis* and *L. hemileucurus*, as are those on Fuerteventura; some are perfect *hemileucurus*. The Osprey is common round these small islands, and breeds on the isolated rocks and on the great precipice of El Risco, 2000 feet almost sheer down, on Lanzarote. The only small land-birds we saw on La Graciosa were Berthelot’s Pipits, Spectacled Warblers, and Common Linnets; a few Common Buzzards live in the walls of the crater of one of the volcanoes. I shot one, the most miserable specimen of *Buteo vulgaris* I ever saw. There is a fine fish-curing establishment on this island, built and started at a great expense, which is fast going to ruin, all the valuable plant being in an absolutely neglected and rotting condition; the fish caught were principally tunnies and sardines.

Leaving Graciosa, we crossed over to Lanzarote, and walked the whole length of the island, and though we kept a sharp look-out, nothing fresh appeared. I think the plain adjoining “Papagayo” is the barrenest in the Canary Islands; it was too poor for Coursers, which is saying a good deal. They tell me there are a few Bustards on it. We then sailed across to Corralejo, in Fuerteventura, passing by the island of Los Lobos. From Corralejo we walked, in two days, by Oliva to Puerto Cabras. Here we embarked for

Las Palmas, but besides some Common Curlews, which are decidedly rare in the Canaries, nothing of note appeared.

I am sorry to have no more islands to go to, and am afraid that, with the exception of the Petrels, nothing much remains to be done; but to observe these satisfactorily, it would be necessary to visit and carefully work the outer islands and rocks during the months of June and July, and I have no greater wish than to do this, accompanied by my energetic friend and mentor Canon Tristram.

XLIV.—*Notes on some Birds obtained at Madeira, Deserta Grande, and Porto Santo.* By W. R. OGILVIE GRANT (Nat. Hist. Mus.).

(Plate XIV.)

It was my good fortune to be invited during the spring of this year to accompany a friend on a five weeks' trip to Madeira, and, having never visited that beautiful island, I gladly embraced the opportunity, and determined, if possible, to obtain there a number of birds which were much wanted for the British Museum Collection. I certainly never dreamed of finding anything new, least of all in the bird-line, and the handsome new Sparrow-Hawk so excellently delineated by Mr. Keulemans in the accompanying Plate was an unexpected surprise.

After a terribly rough voyage from start to finish, we arrived in a somewhat battered condition at Funchal on the 15th of April, truly thankful to find ourselves once more on firm land, where, in the glorious sunshine and delightful climate of that most favoured island, our troubles were soon forgotten. The weather, owing to the late spring, was still all that could be desired, and not too hot to make walking unpleasant. Almost the whole of the three weeks we remained at Madeira were spent in making expeditions in all directions, and combined a very large amount of exercise with a thorough enjoyment of the grand scenery and the delights of collecting zoological specimens of all kinds, though