

14. *Margarornis brunneiceps*. Rio Sueio, 1881. J. Cooper.
15. *Cymbilanius lineatus (fasciatus)*. Rio Sueio, August 15, 1882. J. Cooper.
16. *Grallaricula costaricensis*. Navarro, October 30, 1882. J. Cooper.
17. *Phlogopsis macleanneni*. Rio Sueio, 1882. J. Cooper.
18. *Microchera parvirostris*. Rio Sueio, 1882. J. Cooper.

A larger collection of Costa Rican birds lately presented to the National Museum by Dr. Van Patten, for many years resident at San José, included, among others, the following interesting species, those marked with an * being additional to Mr. Zeledon's catalogue.

- * 1. *Selasphorus ardens*. ♂.
- * 2. *Selasphorus torridus*. ♂ and ♀.
- * 3. *Chætura gaumeri* Lawr. (Compared with types!)
- * 4. *Glaucidium jardinei* (in rufous plumage; = "lansbergi, Ridgw.").
- 5. *Leucopetornis princeps*. 3 adults.

Unfortunately no labels were attached to Dr. Van Patten's specimens, and we are therefore ignorant of the precise localities in which they were obtained.

ON AN ANTIQUE ROMAN MOSAIC FROM CARTHAGE, NOW IN THE UNITED STATES NATIONAL MUSEUM.

Communicated by G. H. HEAP, Esq., United States Consul-General at Tunis.

Many who visited the Centennial Exhibition will remember seeing in the Tunisian section the large and beautifully executed mosaic, representing a Numidian lion seizing an antelope. This admirable work, which probably dates from 100 to 50 years before the Christian era, is of Roman workmanship, and was discovered at Carthage in 1873. It formed a very small part of the vault floor of a temple dedicated to Astarte (Aphrodite), the tutelary deity of the Carthaginians. The Romans, who assimilated the gods of the people they conquered as easily as they absorbed their territories, erected a temple to the goddess of Carthage and adorned it with great splendor. It was situated on a commanding hill facing the sea, near the citadel and other public buildings.*

The Tunisian Government a short time since enacted a law prohibiting private search for antiquities, but granted this privilege to the son of the prime minister at that time in power. The finder of treasures or antique works of art was required, under severe penalties, to give immediate information to this official. The Arabs, however, in spite of imprisonment, bastinado, or fire, not unfrequently appropriated what-

* The remains of some of these edifices are still visible, although now the most conspicuous object is the chapel, erected in 1835, by Louis Philippe, King of the French, and dedicated to the memory of his ancestor, Louis IX, surnamed "the Saint," on the spot where tradition says he died of the plague in 1270 while besieging Tunis.

ever fragments of sculpture, inscriptions, or mosaics, and especially funeral lamps and vases and coins they might find, and sold them secretly to travelers and strangers.

Thus it came to pass, one day, that an old Arab sheik informed the British agent and consul-general, with a great show of secrecy and mystery, that he had discovered a wonderful mosaic floor, a portion of which he offered to take up and deliver for a consideration. He described the floor, which, even with due allowance for the imagination of the Bedouin, was evidently one of the most beautiful and complete works of the kind that had ever been discovered at Carthage. The sheik refused to tell where it was, but promised to bring the piece he had taken up to Sir Richard Wood's country seat, at Carthage, at night. He had recently "eaten stick", or received the bastinado, for having sold some antiquities to a tourist, and had reason to be cautious. A few nights later, however, he came with some eight or ten Arabs who bore the mosaic on their shoulders. A bargain was made, and the precious fragment was deposited in a magazine, where it remained until shipped to Philadelphia in 1875.

The floor of the temple from which it was taken has since been examined. It is of vast extent and the designs were all life-size. From the Arab's description it appears that the center figure represented a female, probably the goddess Astarte, driving a chariot drawn by stags, and around this central design were grouped animals of various kinds—lions, tigers, leopards, stags, antelopes, giraffes, boars, hares, even hippopotami, crocodiles, snakes, and fishes. The only part of the floor that the Arabs succeeded in removing besides the "mosaic lion" was the principal design, representing Astarte in the chariot. This was on its way to Sir Richard Wood's, when unfortunately one of the bearers slipped and fell, and the others fearing to be crushed under it—for it was even larger and more ponderous than the lion—allowed it to fall to the ground, where it was broken into fragments. The only portion, therefore, of this magnificent pavement that now exists is that in the National Museum; the rest was broken in the hasty and clumsy efforts of the Arabs to detach it in sections from its bed.

The "mosaic lion," as it came to be named at the Philadelphia Exhibition, is the largest and most perfect ancient mosaic in America, and it is quite unlikely that anything equal to it will ever find its way to the United States hereafter.

When the Vandals invaded Africa they destroyed all works of art, and to them are due the many headless, armless, and noseless statues found in Barbary. In destroying the temple of Astarte their iconoclastic frenzy was probably more immediately directed against the statuary and other sculptures and in overthrowing them, together with the walls of the edifice. The floor was covered with débris, upon which, in the course of centuries, a deep layer of dust was deposited, which protected the mosaic from the corroding effects of wind and rain, and to this we may attribute its perfect state of preservation.

Vol. VI, No. 27. Washington, D. C. April 11, 1884.

When the Tunisian Government was about sending its collection to Philadelphia in 1875, Sir Richard Wood very liberally offered to send this mosaic, which he had originally intended to present to the British Museum. It was packed with great care, and the steamship companies were earnestly begged to give directions to have it handled with every precaution. It was, however, a trying moment when the heavily iron-bound case was opened, for it was feared that it would be found to contain nothing but a mass of small parti-colored stones. It was, therefore, a surprise as well as gratification to find the mosaic intact.

Its dangers, however, were not yet over, for after it was put in its place in the exhibition it was subject to the attacks of greedy visitors, who made determined, and occasionally successful, attacks upon it for the purpose of obtaining mementos.

After the close of the Centennial Exhibition it remained on deposit in the "Permanent Exhibition" until Sir Richard Wood, with graceful courtesy and liberality, presented it to the National Museum at Washington, where it is to be hoped it will long remain, a unique and valuable relic of the most ancient and renowned republic in the world's history.

PISA, February 19, 1883.

ON THE SKELETON OF *PHOCA (HISTRIOPHOCA) FASCIATA*, ZIMMERMAN.

By **FREDERICK W. TRUE, M. S.,**

Curator of the Department of Mammals.

The National Museum is at present in possession of an interesting series of specimens of the Ribbon Seal, consisting of four skins, three skulls, and a single skeleton. The two finest skins—that of a female of advanced age (13285) and that of an adult male (13284)—were obtained by Mr. William H. Dall in 1880, in Plover Bay, East Siberia. The skeleton of the female was preserved, and forms the principal basis of this paper.

In addition to this material there are also in the Museum a skin and two much broken skulls of young males, one of which (13364) was obtained by Mr. E. W. Nelson at Cape Romanzoff, Alaska, in May, 1880; the other (13363) at Cape Prince of Wales in the autumn of 1879. There is, besides, in the Ethnological Department of the Museum, a skin of the species under consideration, in the form of an Eskimo bag.

The external characteristics of the Ribbon Seal are quite well known. The sexes differ widely in color, the male being black, with a yellowish white band surrounding the fore limbs, and passing over the back, while