

C I R C U L A R

RELATIVE TO

COLLECTIONS OF BIRDS FROM MIDDLE AND SOUTH AMERICA.

THE Smithsonian Institution is desirous of obtaining a complete collection of the birds of Mexico, Central and South America, and the West Indies, to be used in the preparation of a work on the subject, and towards this end respectfully invites the co-operation of the Diplomatic and Naval officers of the United States, and of the friends of science generally.

As a chief object in making this collection is to determine with accuracy the region inhabited by the different species of birds, specimens of all kinds from any locality are desired, and especially the more common and familiar ones, as being the most characteristic. These, as far as practicable, should include illustrations of the different sexes, ages, and changes of plumage of the various species.

The species to which attention should first be directed are the smaller land birds, such as sparrows, wrens, thrushes, warblers, creepers, fly-catchers, humming-birds, woodpeckers, cuckoos, parrots, swallows, etc., and next to them the hawks and owls. The large water birds, as the ducks, geese, great herons, etc., are of less immediate importance, as being better known. The gallinaceous birds, as quails, tinamous, penelopes, curassows, etc., are especially wanted.

Complete collections of the birds inhabiting the different islands of the West Indies are particularly desired.

If time and opportunity do not admit of collecting an extensive series of birds of any locality, the Institution will be pleased

to receive even single specimens, which often furnish hints of much value.

While specimens in any condition of preservation will be thankfully received, their value for the purposes in view will be greatly enhanced by their being well prepared and by being accompanied by accurate indications of the date and place of collection, the sex, and the color of the iris, bill and feet, as well as the length of the bird (from point of bill to end of tail) before being skinned. These data should be written upon a label tied to a leg of the specimen.

Eggs of birds, accompanied by the skin of a parent for verification, are also very desirable.

Full directions for collecting and preserving birds and other specimens of natural history have been published by the Institution, and will be furnished on application. If skins cannot be readily prepared, birds may be preserved by throwing them entire into rum or other spirits.

The Institution has no funds at its command for the purchase of specimens, but it will be happy to make all the return in its power for contributions, in copies of its different publications, especially those based on the specimens received. Full credit will, in all cases, be given for any donations, in the published works of the Institution and on the labels of the specimens. If desired, however, specimens of birds or other animals of North America, will be sent in return.

Collections sent by sea to the Smithsonian Institution, care of the Collector of the Port of New York, will reach their intended destination. The Agents of the Panama R. R. Co., and of the Pacific Mail Steamship Co., on the Isthmus, or on the western coast of America, will also receive and forward specimens. The Diplomatic and Naval officers of the United States have always been found ready to co-operate in forwarding collections to the Institution.

Due notice should always be given to the Institution of the date and channel of forwarding specimens.

JOSEPH HENRY,
Secretary, S. I.