

Natural History.

THE PIED DUCK.

Camptolaimus labradorius.

BY R. M. SHUFELDT, C. M. Z. S., ETC.

NOT long ago (January, 1886) the writer of the present article published in the *Century Magazine* an article entitled "Feathered Forms of Other Days," wherein, after dwelling upon the ancestry of birds now so clearly revealed to us through the discovery of the remains of extinct avian, avireptilian and reptilian forms, he came to consider the list of those birds in different parts of the world which have been exterminated, through one means or another, within comparatively recent times. Among these latter no little attention was paid to the history of the subject of the present article, the pied, or Labrador duck; and in my *Century* essay a figure was given of this interesting bird. In some particulars, however, that illustration was not quite as satisfactory as I should liked to have had it; but that is neither here nor there so far as our present purpose is concerned.

For more than a year after the article I refer to appeared, I received communications from various sources, and often of an exceedingly interesting character, which, in the main, questioned the propriety of including the pied duck among those birds now known to be absolutely

only include the skin and feathers, but all the structural characters besides! I have no doubt that a good pair of these birds, adult specimens in perfect plumage, would command a price of \$300 at the present writing.

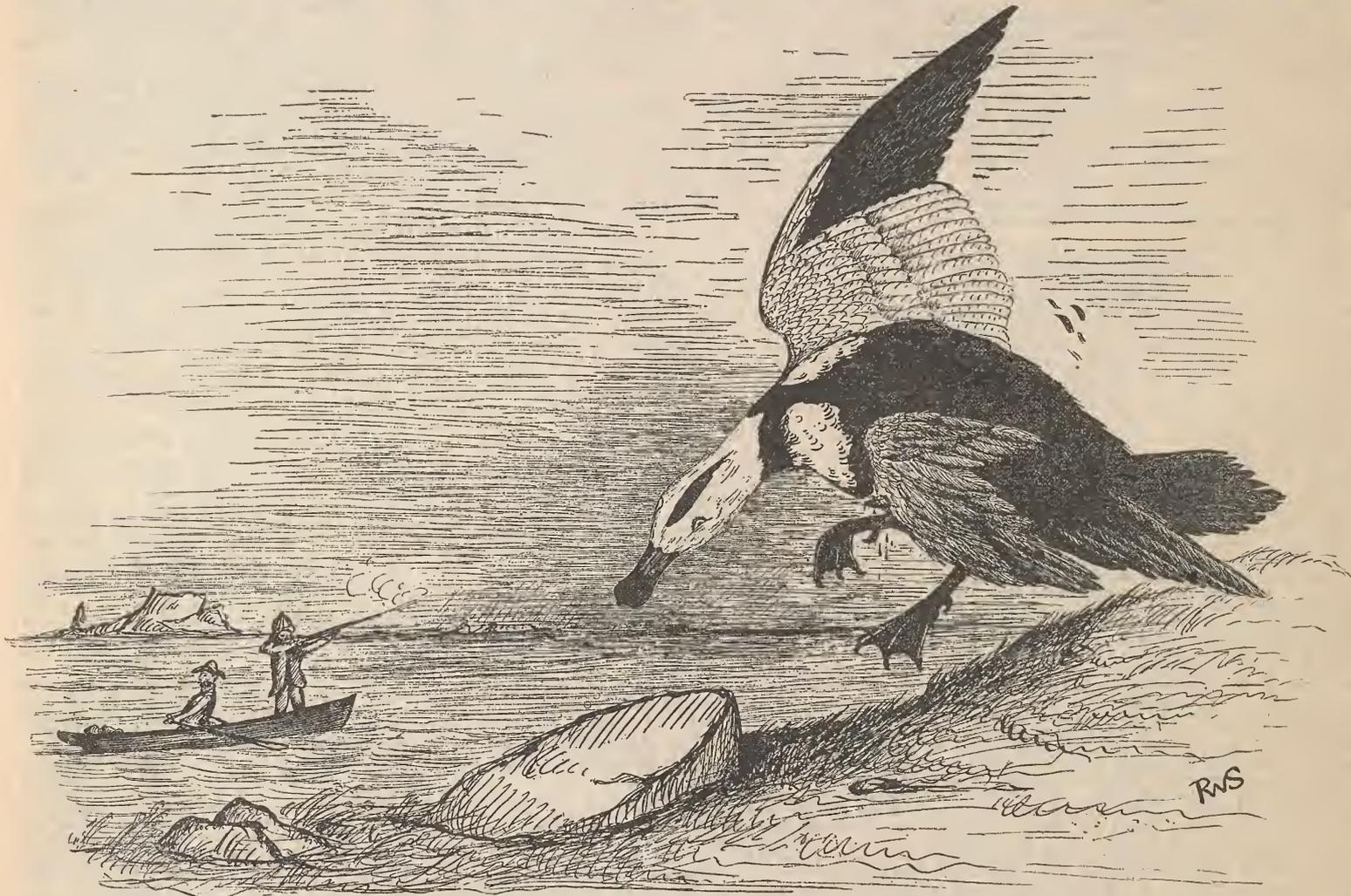
A pied duck was shot in Halifax harbor in 1852, and I am unfamiliar with any record that is of later date. Audubon painted his pair in his admirable figures of the plate to his work from two he had had presented him by the "Honorable Daniel Webster, of Boston, who killed them himself on the Vineyard Islands, on the coast of Massachusetts."

Granting that a few of these birds are still in existence, a male specimen may be known by having length of about 20in., measured to the end of the tail, and to the end of the claws 22½in., and to the end of the wings only 18½in. Alar extent, 30in.; so it will be seen that it is an unusually large duck. Audubon's specimen weighed 1lb. 14½oz., and he tells us that in it the "bill with the basal space between the nostrils running into a rounded point in the middle, pale grayish-blue; the sides of the base and the edges of both mandibles for two-thirds of their length, dull pale orange, the rest of the bill black. Iris reddish hazel. Feet light grayish-blue, webs and claws dusky. Head and upper half of neck white, excepting an elongated black patch on the top of the head and nape. Below the middle of the neck is a black ring, anteriorly is a broad band of white, passing backward on each side, so as to include the scapulars. All the under parts black, excepting the axillaries and lower wing coverts. Upper wing

WHIP SCORPION AND GILA MONSTER.

Editor Forest and Stream:

In your issue of July 28 Dr. R. W. Shufeldt gives your readers an interesting sketch of what he calls the whip-tailed scorpion. In southern Arizona, where I first saw this creature, nearly thirty years ago, the natives called it "Venegraea," as near as I can come to it, and I found it quite common in the entire southern portion of the Territory, especially in the neighborhood of old Fort Buchanan (subsequently renamed Camp Crittenden), where one had only to turn over a few old logs or loose stones to find one or more of these interesting creatures. My sole object in writing this is to place on record at least one case in which the bite of this insect proved fatal. In one of the numerous expeditions after the Apache Indians in that Territory in 1858, the company to which I belonged at the time, D Troop, First Dragoons, captured among other things a small Indian boy, at the time probably six years old. This youngster, while tractable enough in most things could not be induced to sleep under a roof, and preferred to make his bed in an old tent in which a number of packing boxes were stored. He always slept on the ground. The boy took a fancy to me, and one morning he came and tried by pointing to make me understand that something had bitten him on the head, and that it hurt him very much. On examining the place, right in front of and a little above the ear, I noticed that he certainly had been bitten by something; the wounds exuded a yellowish serum, and I supposed at



THE PIED DUCK (*Camptolaimus labradorius*).—MALE; WINTER PLUMAGE.

extinct. Some told me that they had shot specimens within five years, and others had seen it in the flesh even within a more recent date than that, while one correspondent, knew the duck perfectly, had seen one within a month in a market, and would soon be able to send me a pair in alcohol to be used as anatomical material!

It is needless to add, however, that notwithstanding the intention of my good correspondents, I have not up to the present writing been overburdened with specimens of that particular duck. In one or two instances, I must confess, the descriptions sent me, sometimes by old duck hunters, of birds they had recently shot as pied ducks, were very accurate indeed, and I was more than inclined to believe that a *bona fide* capture had been made. And in view of these facts, and inasmuch as the American Ornithologists' Union still keep this duck on our Check List as "now extremely rare, and perhaps extinct," I believe another word about it here will hardly be considered untimely.

There is before me my copy of Audubon's figure of this duck, a splendid colored plate, and some three or four years ago, Mr. Smiley, the talented photographer of the U. S. National Museum, made me a fine photograph of the mounted specimen of the male pied duck in the collections of the Smithsonian Institution. This is also at my hand, and from the two sources in question I have ventured to produce a sketch of the bird myself to illustrate what we have to say here in regard to him, but chiefly to place before sportsmen a figure of the bird which cannot be easily mistaken, and which will serve as a guide in diagnosis in case a specimen be taken upon any of their expeditions. For we will all agree that it would be a shame to pluck a pair of these ducks for the table when not long ago a pair of skins sold in London for \$ 00 cash—yes, only the skins and feathers, to say nothing of what a pair of alcoholics might have brought, which not

coverts and secondary quills white, some of the inner quills with a narrow external black margin; alula, primary coverts, and primary quills, brownish-black. Tail [14 tapering feathers] brownish-black, tinged with gray, the shafts black; upper tail coverts dusky, minutely dotted with reddish-brown." The female is smaller than the male, and in general coloration is of a brownish-gray, with bill, feet, etc., as in the drake; it has, however, white on the sides of its forehead, and some seven or eight of the secondaries of the wing likewise. The remainder of the wings and the tail as in the male; so if a male bird happened to be collected, any such appearing companion taken with it, ought surely to be preserved and with full as much care.

These birds ought to be carefully looked for during the winter season from Labrador to the southern coasts of New Jersey; they have never, I believe, been taken in the interior.

If a specimen in full plumage is captured, there is no reason why it should not furnish, not only a first-class skin, but the entire skeleton and soft parts besides. It should as soon as possible be committed to a jar containing sufficient pure, clear alcohol to cover it completely, when it can be converted into the aforesaid material just so soon as it comes into the hands of a skilled preparateur, and one who fully realizes the great value of the specimen upon which he may be called to operate.

ALBINO HEDGEHOG.—Methuen, Mass.—Mr. C. F. Richardson asked in your issue of June 7 if any of us had ever seen white hedgehogs. Last September I was in the town of Sutton, N. H. Scott Littleade, of that town, had two of them alive, and with them a white woodchuck or ground hog.—C. G. C.

first that it was the bite of a tarantula, for tarantulas were very common also. The boy was at once taken to the hospital, which was then in charge of Asst. Surgeon B. J. D. Sroin, now Lieut.-Col. and Surgeon U. S. Army. The doctor was noted and beloved by the men of that command for his skillful treatment and the tender care bestowed on all his patients, and he had his hands full in that unhealthy place. The writer himself would in all probability have long ago joined the great majority had he fallen in less careful hands than those of genial Dr. Sroin. But to come back—everything that could be done for the Indian boy was done, but notwithstanding he steadily grew worse, his head swelled up to an enormous size, and after lingering for a few weeks or so (as nearly as I can remember) he died. At the suggestion of Dr. Sroin the tent in which the boy slept was thoroughly searched at the time, and some half a dozen or more fully grown insects of this species were found under the boxes, and one of these was nearly dead when found, probably injured by the boy when it bit him. This is the only instance coming under my observation.

Again in your issue of August 4 the indefatigable Dr. Shufeldt furnishes your readers with a most interesting article and an excellent drawing of the little known Gila monster (*H. suspectum*), a reptile met with by me on several occasions during my service in southern Arizona. Perhaps I may be able to add a little to the Doctor's account, which may be interesting to some of your readers. While encamped on the present site of Fort Lowell, Arizona, seven miles from Tucson, on the Rillotto Creek, during the summer of 1872, one of these lizards took up its residence under a board floor in my tent. How long it may have been there before it was discovered I don't know, but as I did not consider it a desirable neighbor it did not stay there long after I located it, and the speci-