CAMPYLOPTERUS PHAINOPEPLUS, s. & G.

Simons's Sabre-wing.

Campylopterus phainopeplus, Salvin & Godman, Ibis, 1879, p. 202.—Iid. Ibis, 1880, p. 171, pl. iv. fig. 1.

This beautiful Humming-bird was discovered by Mr. F. Simons, in the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, in 1879, and was met with by him at altitudes varying between 4000 and 15,000 feet above the sea-level. It has been described by Messrs. Salvin and Godman, who state that it is allied to *Campylopterus villavicencii*, but presenting many points of distinction—the colour of the head not being golden green, the body being much more shining green, the middle tail-feathers steel-blue instead of green, &c.

The following account of the first capture of the species was contributed by Mr. Simons:—

"During an eight months' sojourn in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta I had frequent opportunities of observing this interesting and brilliant Humming-bird, which I believe is migratory, spending the months of February, March, April, and May in the banana plantations of the Lower Nevada, from 4000 to 6000 feet above the sea-level. From June to October I found it in the more elevated regions up to nearly the snowline, or 15,000 feet above the sea-level. While exploring a mountain-gorge near Atanques (4000 feet) I obtained my first specimen, in March. It was resting on a bent twig in the shade of a banana-leaf, and appeared very tame, allowing me to retire some distance before firing. The species was unknown to most of the inhabitants of Atanques, and excited much admiration from its beauty. A few days afterwards I had the pleasure of meeting with it again among the banana-groves of San José. These plantations of the Indians are very extensive along the banks of the Guatapuri, at an elevation of 6000 feet, and are the highest banana-cultivation in the Nevada. This Humming-bird is pretty common here, but solitary; and I seldom saw more than three or, at the most, four in an afternoon. It betrays its presence, not only by the well-known bur-rr of the wings, but also by a sharp double note uttered as it flits from flower to flower. Alighting suddenly on a branch in the shade, it will remain minute after minute without the slightest movement. On these occasions I used to watch them carefully, but never could see them fly away, they disappeared as they came, like phantoms.

"Visiting San Sebastian in June, I was surprised to find the same little beauty, identical in plumage, but with totally different habits. Instead of shunning the sun, as among the bananas, it establishes itself on the topmost twig of some dead branch or scantily clothed tree, and passes the day filling the air with its loud plaintive note in answer to its mate. Every now and then, as a sort of exercise, it would shoot up into the air like a rocket, sound a very pretty twit-twit, turn a few somersaults, and descend gracefully with tail-feathers spread out like a fan. These aerial movements are excessively beautiful, and always resorted to, even if the bird is disturbed. In this latter case it does not return to its accustomed perch, but seeks another tree close by, where it sings on merrily till all danger is past; it always, however, returns to its old haunt. I watched one for a fortnight, and it never forsook its adopted perch. Another I fired at four times successively without effect; in spite of this it always returned to the same tree. They are very wary and difficult to shoot; and I have spent days dodging them backwards and forwards without getting near enough for a shot. June and July are the flowering months in the elevated regions. This may attract them; for I have met with them in all parts of the Nevada, especially in a valley at an elevation of 11,000 feet, where they were abundant, but so shy that there was no approaching them within a hundred yards. On crossing to the northern flank, I found them as low down as San Miguel, 6000 feet. At San Antonio, 3450 feet, not ten miles distant, they were unknown.

"On previous visits to San Sebastian in February and March, this species was not there; but the Indians told me that after the first rains a very beautiful 'Chupa-flor' puts in an appearance, without, however, being very common. Passing a couple of days in San José in August, I found they had disappeared.

"Atanques, a small Indian village of 1000 inhabitants, the capital of the Territory of Nevada, lies in the mountains between the rivers Guatapuri and Badillo, about four miles (as the crow flies) N.E. of Valle Dupar. "The first rains begin in April; May is very wet, June to September showery. The second rains begin

in September; October is the worst month; and November is sometimes wet."

The Plate represents two males and a female of the natural size, the figures having been drawn from the typical specimens lent to us by Messrs. Salvin and Godman.

[R. B. S.]