

All the members of the genus *Ramphomicron* are said to feed on insects which inhabit the alpine Floræ; and their bill is well suited to the capture of the minute insects found in those elevated regions. In some instances the bill is perfectly wedge-shaped, as in *Heliotrrix*; while in others it suddenly turns upwards, as in *Avocettula*. These forms are also adapted for some special purpose, of which, however, at present we are ignorant. Besides these, there are others whose bills approach somewhat to the form of the Flycatchers, as the *Aithurus*. This bird, we know, frequently seizes insects on the wing; and so doubtless do many of the others. It will have been seen that all these forms of bill are well suited for the capture of insects; and, as might be supposed, insects constitute the principal food of the Humming-Bird; but that liquid honey, the pollen, and other saccharine parts of flowers are also partaken of, is evident from the double tubular tongue with which all the species are provided. Besides this, they readily and greedily accept this kind of food when offered to them in a state of captivity, or when the corollas of a bouquet of flowers placed in a window are filled with sugar to entice them to approach; and from my own experience I know that they have been kept in captivity for several months upon this kind of food.

Connected intimately with the mode of flight is the form and structure of the tail; and in no group of birds is this organ more varied; in some species it is four times the length of the body, in others it is so extremely short as to be entirely hidden by the coverts. As cases in point I may mention *Lesbia Amaryllis* and *Calothorax micrurus*. Every Humming-Bird, however, has ten tail-feathers, and no more. I am aware that this number is not apparent in some of the smaller fork-tailed species, the two centre-feathers being so exceedingly minute as to be almost obsolete; but if a careful examination be made, that number will be found. I may instance *Thaumastura Coræ*, *Doricha enicura*, and *Myrtis Fannieæ*.

The tail appears to be, and doubtless is, a very important organ in all the aerial movements of the Trochilidæ; and accordingly we find very great variations in its form among the many different genera of which the family is composed. In *Cometes* and *Lesbia*, the forked character is carried to its maximum, while its minimum is seen in *Calothorax*, *Acestrura*, and the allied groups. The tails of all the members of the two former and many other genera are of this form; while in others it is only seen in a single species of a group, all the other members of which have rounded, square, or cuneate tails. As a case in point I may cite *Eupetomena macroura*, among the *Campylopteri*, which may be regarded as the aerial type of its own particular group. Next to this we may notice the species with feathers terminating in spatules, such as *Loddigesia*, *Spathura*, etc. I was informed by the late Mr. Dyson that the flight of these birds presents a marked difference from that of other Humming-Birds, and that their appearance in the air is most singular,—the tail being not only constantly opened and shut, but the spatules always in motion, particularly when the bird is poising over a flower; and if this be really true, what an extraordinary appearance must the *Loddigesia mirabilis* present during its evolutions! But we cannot attempt to describe it; the discovery of a second example, and the peculiarity of its flight, must be left for future historians to make known to us.

In some few instances, such as *Juliamyia typica* and *Sphenoproctus Pampa*, the tails are cuneate; but this form is quite exceptional, if we exclude the *Phaëthornithes* and *Eutoæeres*, in which this is the prevailing form. Besides the groups with forked or cuneate tails, there are others in which this organ is square or rounded, as in the *Florisugæ* and *Metalluræ*. The reverse of the spatulate form occurs in some species, such as the members of the genus *Gouldia*, in which the tip of the outer tail-feathers terminates in thread-like filaments. The citation of one more will be sufficient to show how widely different is the form of this organ among