

Jamaica possesses three, which are all quite distinct, and so widely different from every other, that it is a perfect mystery to the naturalist how they first obtained a footing there. Nothing like interbreeding between two species appears to occur in this island; if such were the case, we could not but be aware of the fact, since we have not only been for many years in the habit of receiving hundreds of birds from Jamaica, but this island has had the advantage of a naturalist, Mr. Gosse, who has most closely observed the birds resident there. St. Domingo has two species, differing from those of Jamaica. This law with respect to the Humming-Bird inhabitants of the West Indian and Leeward Islands, is equally carried out in the necklace-like string of the Windwards; but when we arrive at the island of Trinidad, the species become much more numerous and partake of the character of those which inhabit the mainland—the opposite shores of Venezuela.

It may be asked, what is our present knowledge of the existing species of Humming-Birds, and if there may not be others to be discovered in the great primeval forests of the western and other parts of the vast continent of the new world. My reply is that, in all probability, many more than are known to us do exist, and that a very lengthened period must elapse before we shall acquire anything like a perfect knowledge of the group. Whatever I may have done towards the elucidation of the subject, I must only be regarded as a pioneer for those who, in future ages, will render our acquaintance with this family of birds so much more complete than it is at the present time.

The regions of South America whose productions are least known are Costa Rica, Veragua, Panama, the sea-board between Carthagen and Guayaquil, the forests of La Paz and other parts of Bolivia, the whole of the eastern slopes of the Andes bordering Peru and Ecuador, and the western portion of Brazil. All these countries will doubtless furnish new kinds of Humming-Birds when the explorer shall extend his researches into their unknown recesses. We may feel fully convinced that such will be the case from the circumstance of single individuals in a youthful or imperfect state, which we cannot identify as belonging to any known species, occasionally occurring in the great collections sent from time to time to Europe. My own collection contains several examples of this kind, which will doubtless at some future day prove to belong to undescribed species. For more than twenty long years have I been sending the most earnest entreaties, accompanied with drawings, to my correspondents in Peru and Ecuador for additional examples of that truly wonderful bird the *Loddigesia mirabilis*. These entreaties have been backed by the offers of large sums of money to any person who would procure them; but up to the present moment no second example has been obtained. Probably the single individual killed by Mr. Matthews in the neighbourhood of Chachapoyas was one which had accidentally strayed beyond the area in which the species usually dwells, and which has not yet been discovered. That it may be a nocturnal bird has sometimes suggested itself to my mind, and that this may be the reason why it has not since been seen. Those of my readers who are not acquainted with this most wonderful member of the Trochilidæ will do well to refer to the plate, in which a correct representation of it is given by the masterly hand of Mr. Richter.

The preceding remarks must, I think, have given the reader a general idea of the countries inhabited by the members of the great family of Humming-Birds; it now becomes necessary to speak of their peculiar structure, and the place they appear to occupy in the Class AVES. By systematists they have been bandied about from one group to another: by some they have been associated with the Sun-Birds (*Nectariniæ*); by others with the *Cypselinæ*, *Piciniæ*, *Sittinæ*, *Certhiniæ*, &c.