

supplies of these birds; and dealers from those countries have established themselves in some of the cities of that part of the world for the like purpose. From Sta. Fé de Bogota alone many thousands of skins are annually sent to London and Paris, and sold as ornaments for the drawing-room and for scientific purposes. The Indians readily learn the art of skinning and preserving, and, as a certain amount of emolument attends the collecting of these objects, they often traverse great distances for the purpose of procuring them; districts more than a hundred miles stretching away from each side of Bogota are strictly searched; and hence it is that from these places alone we receive not less than seventy species of this family of birds. In like manner the residents of many parts of Brazil employ their slaves in collecting, skinning, and preserving them for the European market; and many thousands are annually sent from Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, and Pernambuco. They also supply the inmates of the convents with many of the more richly coloured species for the manufacture of artificial-feather flowers. How numerous, then, must these birds be in their native wilds, and how wonderfully must they keep in check the peculiar kind of insect life upon which they principally feed! doubtless, one of the objects for which they were designed. After these few cursory remarks, I proceed to give a general history of the group, the range and distribution of the species, and such additional information as I have acquired during the course of my labours.

“The first mention which is made of the Humming-Birds,” says M. Lesson, “in the narratives of the adventurers who proceeded to America, not with the design of studying its natural productions, but for the discovery of gold, dates from 1558, and is to be found in ‘Les Singularités de la France Antarctique’ (Brazil) of André Thévet and Jean de Léry, companions of La Villegaignon, who attempted in 1555 to found a French colony there; but these superficial accounts would not have unfolded their natural history, had not the old naturalists who published their observations at the commencement of the seventeenth century taken care to make them better known; and we find some good accounts of them in the voluminous compilation of Nieremberg, in the collection of fragments from the great works of Hernandez or Fernandez, and in those of Piso. Ximenez, Acosta, Gomara, Maregrave, Garcilasso, and Dutertre often mention these birds, but their remarks are so superficial that it would be of little use to quote them now. Towards the end of the same century Sir Hans Sloane, Catesby, Edwards, Brown, Father Labat, Plumier, Louis Feuillée, and Rochefort gave tolerably complete figures and descriptions of some of the species; but it was not until the commencement of the eighteenth century that we became better acquainted with their natural history.”

It will be seen that little was really known respecting the Humming-Birds even at the end of the career of the great Linnæus. From Captain Cook both Pennant and Linnæus became aware that a species was found as far north as Nootka Sound, while every voyager to the eastern shores of North America brought tidings of its representative in the *Trochilus Colubris*. Jamaica, St. Domingo, and the smaller islands of the West Indies furnished a fair quota of species inhabiting those countries; and correspondents were speedily established by Sloane, Brown, Edwards, and Catesby in Hispaniola, Demerara, and Brazil. Throughout all these regions the Humming-Birds, and indeed their other zoological productions, were then but partially, and only partially, known. The great primeval forests of Brazil, the vast palm-covered districts of the deltas of the Amazon and the Orinoco, the fertile flats and savannahs of Demerara, the luxuriant and beautiful region of Xalapa (the realm of perpetual spring) and other parts of Mexico, were literally untrodden ground by the ornithological collector. Up to this time the vast provinces of the New World had only been skirted; all within was virgin land, wherein even the explorer had scarcely placed a foot, and where the only human inhabitants were the wild children of nature—the Botacudos and other tribes of