

prefer taking a cursory glance at what has been written about American birds from the date of the earliest records we have on the subject up to the present time,—calling your attention to a few of the more remarkable species found near this city; and leaving with the Association a list of all the birds which have been observed in *Ontario*, with special reference to those found in our near neighborhood. This list, I hope, may be useful to the rising generation of Ornithologists, serving as time rolls on, to show by comparison what changes take place in the number and distribution of the different species. So long ago as 1860 I read a similar paper, and presented to this Association a similar list, which subsequently appeared in the *Canadian Journal* for that year; but so many changes have, since that time, been made in the nomenclature, and in the arrangement of the different groups, that we would not now be able to recognize the birds by the names then given them. These frequent changes have been a constant source of annoyance to the student, who, after getting fairly familiar with the system, and having occasion to leave it for a short time, may find on his return that he will have to begin all over again and learn to recognize his old friends by new names—an experience which is certainly very discouraging, and yet when we consider how these changes are brought about it seems hardly possible for the present to avoid the difficulty.

To such as have given even a limited amount of attention to the subject, it will be apparent that among birds there exist certain natural groups or families, the members of which are related to each other. Classification undertakes to separate and set apart each of those groups by itself, under a special family name, and did we know all the birds in existence, and in what ways they resemble each other, and in what ways they differ, the work would be comparatively easy; but unfortunately, here as elsewhere, human knowledge is incomplete, and the results are defective for want of proper data. Besides the difficulties arising from defective knowledge of the subject, it is evident that the arrangement of the groups can be carried out in different ways, as viewed from different standpoints: One may take as the basis of his system the formation of the bill and feet, while another, ignoring these points, may class together only such birds as resemble each other in their anatomical structure,