

the Chelifer is or is not a parasite on the house-fly. It is fully recognised now that house-flies play an important part in the distribution of the germs of certain diseases that affect mankind. Any animal, therefore, that injures or destroys the flies may assist in checking the spread of disease. But if, as Mr. Pocock suggests, the object of the Chelifer is to feed upon the acarine parasites of its host, it serves rather as a friend than a foe to the fly, and should certainly not be called a parasite.

There is no anatomical reason for believing that the Chelifers that have been found on flying insects are specially adapted to a parasitic mode of life, nor is there any evidence that the house-flies they are attached to are infested with mites or any other skin parasites. If the Chelifers are not parasitic on the flies, and there are no mites for them to attack, how can the association of the two forms be accounted for otherwise than by the transportation hypothesis?

Since I wrote my last letter to you I have found that this matter has been most fully discussed by Mr. Kew in his article on Lincolnshire Pseudoscorpions in the *Naturalist* for July, 1901, and I would refer readers of NATURE who are interested in the subject to that paper for fuller particulars.

SYDNEY J. HICKSON.

University of Manchester, October 21.

#### The Rudimentary Hind Limbs of the Boine Snakes.

It is a well known fact that the pythons and boas and some allied forms among snakes possess rudiments of hind limbs, these vestiges—to quote Boulenger's "Catalogue of Snakes in the British Museum"—"usually terminating in a claw-like spur visible on each side of the vent." These structures are always mentioned in general works upon Ophidia, such as Hoffmann's account of the serpents in vol. vi. of Bronn's "Klassen und Ordnungen des Thierreichs," and Gadow's "Reptiles and Amphibians" in the "Cambridge Natural History." But in none of the three treatises to which I refer is there any further account of the "claws" or "spurs." It is merely stated that they are present. It is not mentioned in these works, nor in some others which I have consulted, that the claws in question offer valuable sexual characters by the aid of which individuals can be referred to their proper sex, at least in certain Boidæ. The fact that these characters have been so largely overlooked is perhaps due to the slight stress laid upon them by Duméril and Bibron (*Erpétologie Générale*, vol. vi., 1844), who, however, did direct attention to the occurrence of differences in these organs between the two sexes in a number of Boidæ. But they speak of the claws merely as being "d'une très petite dimension chez des femelles," and as "plus développés chez les mâles que chez les femelles." The first of these quotations refers to Euneetes, the second to Boa. The differences, however, in *Euneetes notacus* are greater. In this southern anaconda, of which several specimens were lately deposited in these gardens by the Hon. Walter Rothschild, there is in the male a sharp curved claw turned downwards and ridged along its lower surface. In the female, on the other hand, the representative of this claw is not a claw at all strictly speaking—if, that is to say, we mean by a claw a nail-like structure which is curved and compressed and ends in a sharp point. In the female there is a straight, blunt, horny process distinctly unlike the sharp claw of the male. In two young examples of this anaconda, which are females, the same type of horny structure is found as in the adult female. In the allied genus *Eryx* there are still greater differences between the two sexes.

FRANK E. BEDDARD.

Zoological Society's Gardens, October 18.

#### A Rare Game Bird.

MR. SAWBRIDGE (p. 605) has raised one of the most perplexing points connected with bird-migration. I cannot answer for the eastern counties of England, but here, in the south-west of Scotland, we are still further from the headquarters of the quail than he is. Fifty years ago quails bred regularly in western Galloway; as a boy I recollect that two or three brace were quite a common complement to a September bag. Indeed, when a

"cheeper" or undersized partridge was shot, "Put it down as a quail!" was the usual comment. These birds gradually disappeared; the last that I myself shot was about the year 1868; but an odd one has been obtained here and there in the district ever since. One, I know, was shot last month in the neighbourhood of Newton Stewart, and was reckoned such a curiosity that it was sent to the bird-stuffer. I am sorry that I do not know whether it was a young or an old bird. Besides this, other instances, if I mistake not, have been recorded in the *Field* from different parts of the country.

As to the cause of the general disappearance of quails from this district, there have been many speculations, the commonest notion being that the supply is so heavily taxed in the Mediterranean region that few birds escape to the north. Truly, when one considers the enormous consignments of quails to London, Paris, &c., there is no reason for surprise that the migrants should dwindle in number.

I have a vague recollection of being told in boyhood that about the year 1838 there was a large influx of quails into Galloway, and that they had bred there ever since, but in numbers annually decreasing. It is conceivable that a storm-driven flock may have been carried out of their bearings, and, finding food abundant and climate enduring, if not altogether congenial, remained as colonists, but that our wet summers have proved adverse to their young being reared. The fluctuation in the stock of partridges caused by the character of different seasons is very remarkable, and evidently neither the numbers nor the constitution of our quails have enabled them to survive adverse conditions of temperature and rainfall. This makes the sporadic occurrence of individuals at long intervals all the more remarkable and perplexing.

HERBERT MAXWELL.

Monreith, Wigtownshire, October 22.

#### On a New Species of Guenon from the Cameroons.

A CHARMINGLY docile species of guenon, obtained by Cross, of Liverpool, from the Cameroons, in West Africa, and recently submitted to me for identification proves to be undescribed. I propose for it the name *Cercopithecus crossi*, in compliment to the courteous proprietor of that large and well known importing house of wild animals, and for popular use the same of Cross's guenon. The animal is a male, apparently nearly full grown, but not entirely adult, as the condition of its teeth indicate. It is very similar to *C. moloneyi* of Sclater, in general appearance, in having the broad rufous lower back, but differs in having a large and bushy white beard, white throat, and bushy whiskers of black hairs ringed with white; the band across the forehead deep black instead of fulvous; sides of head speckled black and white; underside of body sooty-black speckled with white; the tail not deep black except at tip, but speckled black and white like the upper part of the back; the black on the forearm externally does not extend to the shoulder, and not much beyond the elbow; the outer aspect of thighs is black slightly peppered with white; the inside of arms below the elbow black, higher up sooty-grey; inside of hind limbs sooty-black.

The top of the head is black, the hairs sparsely ringed with white; the face, cheeks, and ears quite nude and purplish black in colour; long superciliary hairs are present; the callosities are small and purplish sooty-grey in colour.

From *C. albigularis* (Sykes's guenon) the present species differs in wanting the yellowish wash on shoulders, fore and hind limbs, and in having a brindled and not a black tail.

HENRY O. FORBES.

The Museums, Liverpool, October 12.

#### The Absorption Spectrum of Benzene in the Ultra-violet Region.

WE were glad to see in NATURE of October 5 a letter from Prof. Hartley in which he points out the near agreement between our measurements of the bands in the absorption spectrum of benzene and those made by Prof. Dobbie and himself. He also directs attention to the work of Friederichs, who, in the case of benzene vapour,