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Abyssinian Birds and Mammals: Painted from life by Louis Agassiz Fuertes

Louis Agassiz Fuertes
Field Museum of Natural History

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ABYSSINIAN BIRDS AND MAMMALS

Painted from life by

LOUIS AGASSIZ FUERTES

Published by

FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

CHICAGO, U. S. A.

Through the generosity of C. Suydam Cutting

ALBUM OF
ABYSSINIAN BIRDS AND MAMMALS

FROM PAINTINGS BY
LOUIS AGASSIZ FUERTES

SPECIAL PUBLICATION OF FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
CHICAGO, U. S. A.

Through the generosity of Mr. C. Suydam Cutting, Field Museum is privileged to present in the accompanying portfolio a selected series of reproductions of the last work of the late Louis Agassiz Fuertes. The original paintings, made on the Field Museum—*Chicago Daily News* Abyssinian Expedition of 1926–27, were purchased by Mr. Cutting, after the artist's untimely death, and presented to the Museum. The great popularity and the prominence of Mr. Fuertes as the leading American painter of birds, together with the opinion freely expressed that these final studies represented the height of his power, brought a demand for their reproduction in some form that would make them available to a wide circle. When this became known to Mr. Cutting he promptly and most generously guaranteed the cost, with the result here produced.

The Field Museum—*Chicago Daily News* Abyssinian Expedition was doubly fortunate in having Mr. Fuertes as one of its members. His talent and skill as an artist and ornithologist were scarcely less important than his charm of personality and his unfailing loyalty. This expedition traversed a large part of Abyssinia (Ethiopia), making collections which cover a wide variety of conditions. The opportunity it gave Fuertes for life studies of African birds was varied and unusual. Theretofore engaged solely in painting American birds, he found a tremendous enthusiasm in a new field and plunged into it with joyous abandon and tireless energy. The conditions under which he worked were ideal for him, although to a less versatile painter they might have been distressing instead of stimulating. A large expedition constantly on the march offers extraordinary opportunities for observing birds under various environments, but it also presents many practical difficulties for a painter.

As all recognized who knew him, Louis Fuertes was a man of many talents. He sometimes spoke of himself as an ornithologist first and a painter afterward and certain it is that the two were most effectively combined in him. When hunting and observing birds, no trail was too rough for him, and at the skinning table no hours too long. With gun in hand he was a hunter and collector, having no qualms at the shedding of blood; but with a freshly killed bird before him, he was the impressionable artist and would sit stroking its feathers in a detached ecstasy, wholly oblivious of companions or surroundings. Pure beauty in all things fascinated him, and the exquisite combinations of color and texture shown

by many small birds were his constant joy. It is significant, however, that his favorites among all birds were the falcons—the swiftest, boldest, and most dashing of their kind.

The affiliations which Fuertes made with Field Museum and other institutions were mutually advantageous and usually so arranged that he retained originals of sketches and paintings for himself, while specimens collected were shared; but so conscientious was he that what some might have considered his own interest was often neglected. He was a good shot and ardent hunter, and had such an inexpressible joy in the living bird and its surroundings that he would forget everything else, including his painting. In Abyssinia he collected birds for the Museum so assiduously that there was little time left for painting, although a more selfish person might have done the reverse. Altogether, he collected and personally prepared, labeled, and packed no less than one thousand bird skins—a good record, even if no painting had been done.

This artist-naturalist possessed unlimited patience at the skinning table and the drawing board, but otherwise it was not always evident, and at times his impetuosity nearly brought on disaster. His first day in Africa was in Djibouti on the hot coast of the Red Sea, and while others made necessary arrangements for progress inland or sipped cool drinks on the hotel veranda, he slipped out of the settlement, dodging local gendarmes, and in the sweltering heat shot seventeen small birds which were skinned with penknives that night in the hotel. The next day on the inland train, after it had crossed the Abyssinian border but before customs formalities, he was tantalized by unknown birds seen at a distance. Finally, at a small station, over the heads of a gaping and jabbering crowd of Abyssinians, a beautiful blue roller alighted on the telephone wire. Fuertes could stand it no longer but dove into his luggage for a small shot pistol and started out of the standing train intent on having the bird in his hands, come what might. It required the combined efforts of the four other members of the party, with argument and at least with threatened force, to convince him that the bird was not worth the almost inevitable altercation with bystanders which would follow. This was characteristic, and similar incidents took place from time to time throughout the trip. The sight of a new bird might at any time cause Fuertes to abandon in a flash all practical considerations, his own safety or comfort, plans for the day, and hopes for the morrow. As Dr. F. M. Chapman has said, "That instinctive, inexplicable passion for birds which arouses an uncontrollable desire to know them intimately in their haunts and to make them part of our lives, and which overcomes every obstacle until, in a measure at least, this longing is gratified, is the heritage of the elect; and few have been more richly endowed than Louis Fuertes."

The total number of paintings made by Fuertes in Abyssinia is 108, including a few of mammals and a few mere sketches of birds, scarcely more than records of the fugitive colors of soft and unfeathered parts which are altered in the preserved specimen. As intimated above, the number might have been much greater, but his passion for the living bird was so intense and his loyalty to the expedition and to the Museum so marked that his time was spent largely in hunting, observ-

ing, and preparing specimens. Since the painting required daylight, it would often be done at the expense of the skinning which was then accomplished by candlelight far into the night hours. Under these conditions it is remarkable that such splendid results were obtained. The painting was in almost all cases done in the tent, the artist sitting on his sleeping cot and his materials and specimens scattered all about him. His technique was something secure and mastered and rarely offered him any difficulty. Sometimes a picture would be finished within an hour and seldom did one occupy more than two hours. Occasionally one would be taken up on a later day for finishing, and a few were left for final touches when he should be returned to the quiet of his own studio. He was limited to one size of sheet on which to work and, since all subjects were done in natural size, the larger birds could not be shown entire. Nevertheless, there was pictorial quality and subtle feeling in nearly every subject and, although many must be regarded merely as studies, they all reflect the power and genius of their creator.

If it be true, as many have felt, that this series of paintings represents high-water mark in the artist's career as well as its termination, the explanation may perhaps be found in the joyous, high pitch to his spirits, which was maintained throughout the Abyssinian expedition. From beginning to end, he was like a boy let out of school. His enjoyment of every feature of the expedition, scientific, practical, and social, was intense and exuberant. He was under no irksome compulsions, and the pictures he painted were of his own free choosing with no regard to whether or not they might ever be sold or put to any definite use. Spontaneous expression of his pencil and brush, therefore, was natural and easy.

The thirty-two subjects presented herewith have been selected from the larger number the originals of which are preserved in Field Museum. They include four studies of mammals and twenty-eight of birds, among which the proportion of raptorial species is rather large, these being the artist's favorites. They have been reproduced by offset lithography in eight and sometimes nine colors. Proofs have been very carefully scrutinized and, in practically all cases, complete fidelity to the originals has been obtained.

WILFRED H. OSGOOD, Curator of Zoology

November, 1930

LIST OF SUBJECTS

1. Cape Teal. *Anas capensis* (Gmelin).
2. Spur-winged Goose. *Plectropterus gambensis* (Linnaeus).
3. Secretary Bird. *Sagittarius serpentarius* (Miller).
4. White-necked Vulture. *Pseudogyps africanus* (Salvadori).
5. Lappet-faced Vulture. *Torgos tracheliotus nubicus* Smith.
6. White-headed Vulture. *Trionoceph occipitalis* (Burchell).
7. Egyptian Vulture. *Neophron percnopterus* (Linnaeus).
8. Abyssinian Lanner. *Falco biarmicus abyssinicus* Neumann.
9. African Swallow-tailed Kite. *Chelictinea riocourii* (Vieillot and Oudart).
10. Black-shouldered Kite. *Elanus caeruleus* (Desfontaines).
11. African Tawny Eagle. *Aquila rapax raptor* Brehm.
12. Bateleur Eagle. *Terathopius ecaudatus* (Daudin).
13. Bateleur Eagle. *Terathopius ecaudatus* (Daudin).
14. African Sea Eagle. *Cuncuma vocifer* Daudin.
15. African Sea Eagle (Immature). *Cuncuma vocifer* Daudin.
16. Bearded Vulture. *Gypaetus barbatus meridionalis* (Keys. and Blas.).
17. African Harrier Hawk. *Gymnogenys typicus* (Smith).
18. Black-bellied Bustard. *Lissotis melanogaster* (Rüppell).
19. Lowe's Sand-grouse. *Eremialector quadricinctus lowei* Grant.
20. Green Pigeon. *Vinago waalia* (Meyer).
21. Gray Plantain-eater. *Crinifer zonurus* (Rüppell).
22. Pigmy Kingfisher. *Corythornis cristata* (Pallas).
23. Gray-headed Kingfisher. *Halcyon leucocephala* (Müller).
24. Crested Hornbill. *Bycanistes cristatus* (Rüppell).
25. African Night Heron. *Nycticorax leuconotus* (Wagler).
26. Narina Trogon. *Apaloderma narina* (Stephens).
27. Nile Helmet-shrike. *Prionops concinnata* Sundevall.
28. Thick-billed Raven. *Corvultur crassirostris* Brehm.
29. Abyssinian Wolf. *Canis simensis* Rüppell.
30. Gelada Baboon. *Theropithecus gelada* Rüppell.
31. Gelada Baboon. *Theropithecus gelada* Rüppell.
32. Abyssinian Duiker. *Sylvicapra abyssinicus* Thomas.

COMPILER'S NOTE

This portfolio was published by the Field Museum of Natural History in 1930 in an edition consisting of a slipcased set of 32 separate 10" × 12" lithographed plates on 10-point (approximately) natural-white stock. Each image was backed with a brief description. The images were presented within warm gray borders of approximately 1". Some plates were vertical, others horizontal, depending on the image; the descriptions on the back reflected the orientation of the front image. The portfolio also included a 4-page folio leaflet containing a 3-page essay by Wilfred Osgood and a "List of Subjects."

The electronic edition presented here was prepared from a copy of the original published portfolio held by the Special Collections Department of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries. This copy was received as a gift from Mrs. C. Harold Claytor. Scanning was done by the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities. Images were scanned at 300 dpi and saved as RGB files in JPEG format. Color corrections were made using Adobe Photoshop and the layouts were done in Adobe InDesign by Paul Royster of the Office of Scholarly Communication.

The electronic edition is presented as 12" × 12" pages to allow for both vertical and horizontal images. The reverse-side descriptions, originally printed in medium gray, are shown here in black. All images are shown at their original size. Some slight damage to edges of the borders of a few plates have been electronically restored.

The portfolio was published without copyright notice, making it public domain according to the law in force at that time.

Paul Royster
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

May 18, 2009

CAPE TEAL

Nettion capensis (Gmelin)

(Four-fifths natural size)

This duck is a common inhabitant of African ponds and streams. It is somewhat related to the green-winged teal of North America.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

Published by

Field Museum of Natural History
Chicago, U. S. A.

Through the generosity of C. Suydam Cutting

No. 1. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



CAPE TEAL

SPUR-WINGED GOOSE

Plectropterus gambensis (Linnaeus)

(Four-fifths natural size)

This fine species is found near rivers and ponds but also visits cultivated fields. It has a spur on the inside of each wing which is used in fighting.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

Published by

Field Museum of Natural History
Chicago, U. S. A.

Through the generosity of C. Suydam Cutting

No. 2. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals

Plectropterus gambensis.



-Lake Tsano-
April 4,
1927-

SPUR-WINGED GOOSE

SECRETARY BIRD

Sagittarius serpentarius (Miller)

(Four-fifths natural size)

An inhabitant of the open plains. It feeds on snakes, lizards, and other small animals which it kills by repeated blows with its feet. It is nearly related to the vultures and hawks.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

Published by

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No. 3. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



Secretary Bird
Sagittarius
Serpentarius.

Dangela
Gojam.
Mar. 25. 1927.

SECRETARY BIRD

WHITE-NECKED VULTURE

Pseudogyps africanus (Salvadori)

(Four-fifths natural size)

This vulture is most common in forest regions, though it is often found on the African plains in company with other carrion-feeders.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

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No. 4. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



WHITE-NECKED VULTURE

LAPPET-FACED VULTURE

Torgos tracheliotus nubicus (Smith)

(Four-fifths natural size)

The curiously folded, naked skin of the head is a marked feature of this species. It is one of the largest of Old World vultures and, like others, it feeds mainly on carrion.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

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No. 5. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals

Length 39"
Wing 29"
Tail - "
Extent - 9'-3"



Gedeb Mts.,
Dec. 7, 1926
Eared Vulture

Torgos tracheliotus ruber

LAPPET-FACED VULTURE

WHITE-HEADED VULTURE

Trigonoceps occipitalis (Burchell)

(Four-fifths natural size)

This vulture commonly feeds apart from other species. It is widely distributed in Africa except in the heavily forested regions.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

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No. 6. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



WHITE-HEADED VULTURE

EGYPTIAN VULTURE

Neophron percnopterus (Linnaeus)

(Four-fifths natural size)

A common and well known species.
It nests on rocky precipices and, in
Egypt, on the pyramids. It is one of
the birds commonly represented in
Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Painted from life by

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No. 7. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



EGYPTIAN VULTURE

ABYSSINIAN LANNER

Falco biarmicus abyssinicus Neumann

(Four-fifths natural size)

The lanner is a true falcon, swift, active, and powerful in flight. It is a relative of the well known peregrine falcon and has been a favorite among the species used in falconry.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

Published by

Field Museum of Natural History
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No. 8. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals

N'Jabarra Gofam -
Falco biarmicus ^{abyssinicus} Mar. 22 -
1927



ABYSSINIAN LANNER

AFRICAN SWALLOW-TAILED KITE

Chelictinea riocourii (Vieillot and Oudart)

(Four-fifths natural size)

This bird is very graceful in flight and is seen mostly on the wing, rarely perching or alighting on the ground. It feeds principally on small birds.

Painted from life by

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No. 9. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



AFRICAN SWALLOW-TAILED KITE

BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE

Elanus caeruleus (Desfontaines)

(Four-fifths natural size)

This handsome kite feeds on insects, small birds, rodents, and reptiles. When resting, its perch is usually a bush or a small tree. Its flight is light and buoyant.

Painted from life by

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No. 10. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



Black Shouldered
KITE
(*Elanus caeruleus*)

shot and presented by
Ras Hailu,

Bichara, Cojam,
Mar. 1, 1927.

BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE

AFRICAN TAWNY EAGLE

Aquila rapax raptor Brehm

(Four-fifths natural size)

A powerful species of predatory habits, which feeds on small antelopes, hares, bustards and other such game. It is allied to the well known golden eagle of northern countries. Its nest is a large structure occupied and enlarged from year to year.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

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No. 11. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



Aquila rapax raptor
N'jabarra, Gojam
-Mar. 23. 1927-
-(living bird)-

Tawny Eagle

BATELEUR EAGLE

Terathopius ecaudatus (Daudin)

(Four-fifths natural size)

This handsome eagle kills much of its own prey but sometimes is found devouring carrion in company with the vultures. Its soaring flight is unusually swift and graceful.

Painted from life by

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No. 12. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



Bateleur Eagle
Helotarsus ecaudatus.

Near N'jabarra
Mar 20, 1927.

BATELEUR EAGLE

BATELEUR EAGLE

Terathopius ecaudatus (Daudin)

The extremely short tail gives these birds in flight a peculiar abbreviated appearance that is very characteristic. They are rarely seen except on the wing, where they are very expert, swift, and graceful.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

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Field Museum of Natural History
Chicago, U. S. A.

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No. 13. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals

Bateleur Eagles
(*Helotarsus ecaudatus*)
T. J. Barra, Gorani.
- Mar. 20, 1927.



BATELEUR EAGLE

AFRICAN SEA EAGLE

Cuncuma vocifer (Daudin)

(Four-fifths natural size)

Common on the coast and found also inland in the vicinity of rivers and lakes. It is usually seen perched in conspicuous places near the water or flapping slowly over the surface, ready to pounce on an unlucky fish that rises too near the top.

Painted from life by

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No. 14. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



AFRICAN SEA EAGLE

AFRICAN SEA EAGLE

Cuncuma vocifer (Daudin)

(Four-fifths natural size)

This species has been accused of killing small lambs on occasion, but its ordinary food consists of much smaller and more easily procured animals, such as fish, crabs, and reptiles, to which is added a variable amount of carrion.

Painted from life by

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No. 15. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



AFRICAN SEA EAGLE
IMMATURE

BEARDED VULTURE

Gypaetus barbatus meridionalis Keys. and Blas.

(Four-fifths natural size)

A southern relative of the lammer-geyer of the Alps. It commonly feeds on carrion, though it is known, at times, to kill its prey. Its flight is stately and powerful.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

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No. 16. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



BEARDED VULTURE

AFRICAN HARRIER HAWK

Gymnogenys typicus (Smith)

(Four-fifths natural size)

A hunter of small prey such as frogs, lizards, snakes, and some small birds. It frequents grasslands and burned-over areas, and usually flies only moderate distances, resting at frequent intervals.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

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No. 17. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



AFRICAN HARRIER HAWK

BLACK-BELLIED BUSTARD

Lissotis melanogaster (Rüppell)

(Four-fifths natural size)

A bird of rather solitary habits found on the open grassy plains. It is considered a game bird and is hunted both for sport and for food, since its flesh is excellent.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

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No. 18. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



BLACK-BELLIED BUSTARD

LOWE'S SAND GROUSE

Eremialector quadricinctus lowei (Grant)

(Four-fifths natural size)

Sand grouse are found singly or in flocks on sandy or pebbly ground where they are not easy to see, owing to their coloration which matches their surroundings. They are related to the pigeons and also to the gallinaceous birds.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

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No. 19. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



LOWE'S SAND GROUSE

GREEN PIGEON

Vinago waalia (Meyer)

(Four-fifths natural size)

A fine game bird, difficult to see when feeding quietly in green foliage. It is given to sudden and rapid flight which calls for prompt and accurate shooting on the part of the hunter. It frequents wild fig trees and feeds on the fruit.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

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No. 20. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



GREEN PIGEON

GRAY PLANTAIN EATER

Crinifer zonurus (Rüppell)

(Four-fifths natural size)

This is a very noisy, restless bird, somewhat distantly related to the cuckoos. It travels in pairs or small flocks and feeds on fruit, inhabiting light scrub rather than heavy forest.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

Published by

Field Museum of Natural History
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No. 21. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



GRAY PLANTAIN EATER

PIGMY KINGFISHER

Corythornis cristata (Pallas)

(Four-fifths natural size)

This tiny kingfisher is no larger than a sparrow. It feeds on water insects as well as very small minnows. It is found over most of Africa south of the Sahara Desert.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

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No. 22. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals

MINERAL HOT SPRINGS
25 MILES WEST OF
LAKE T'ZANA
APRIL 8, 1927

Corythornis c. cristata.



PIGMY KINGFISHER

GRAY-HEADED KINGFISHER

Halcyon leucocephala (Müller)

(Four-fifths natural size)

This handsome bird is commonly found in the forests of central Africa as well as along the margins of streams. Its food consists of insects, small reptiles and fish.

Painted from life by

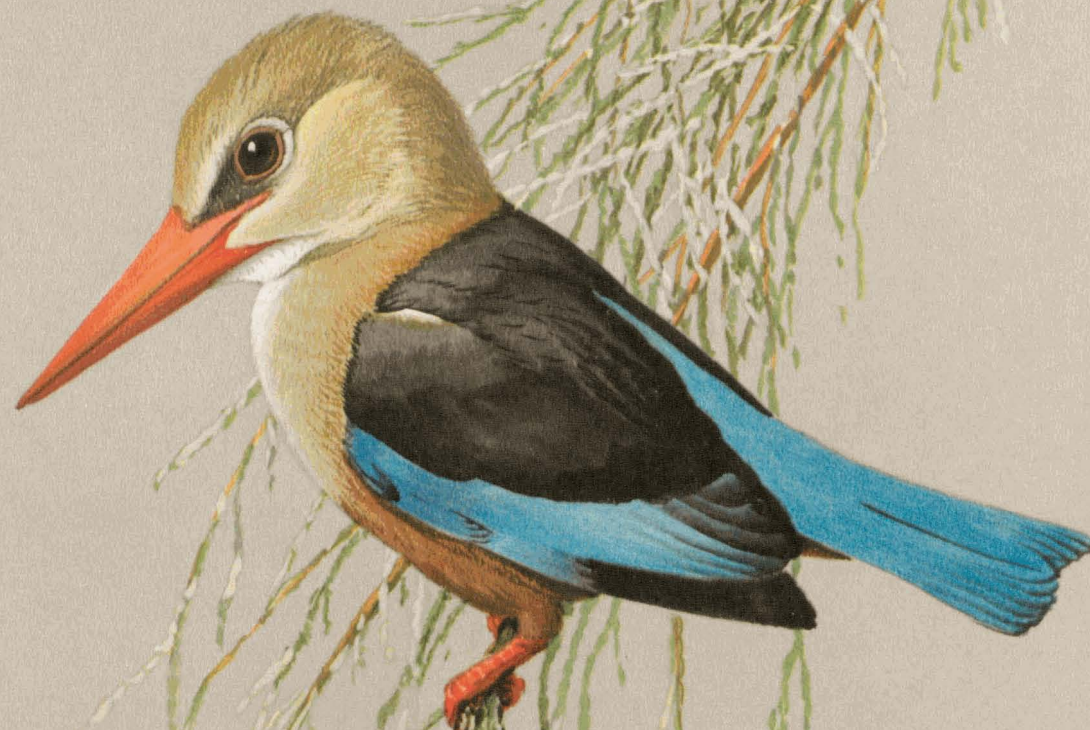
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No. 23. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



25 MILES WEST OF
LAKE T'SANA,
- April 7, 1927 -

Halcyon l. leucocephala.

GRAY-HEADED KINGFISHER

CRESTED HORNBILL

Bycanistes cristatus (Rüppell)

(Four-fifths natural size)

The loud voice, noisy flight, and large size of these hornbills make them very conspicuous. They are forest birds and feed mainly on fruit. They sometimes gather in numbers to roost together.

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No. 24. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



CRESTED HORNBILL

AFRICAN NIGHT HERON

Nycticorax leuconotus (Wagler)

(Four-fifths natural size)

The very large eye of this species is in accord with its nocturnal habits. It is found mainly in west-central Africa, especially in the lowlands along the upper branches of the Nile and the Congo rivers.

Painted from life by

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AFRICAN NIGHT HERON

NARINA TROGON

Apaloderma narina (Stephens)

(Four-fifths natural size)

Like other trogons, this species inhabits deep forests, mainly in mountainous regions. It is ordinarily shy but may be decoyed by imitations of its soft whistled note.

Painted from life by

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No. 26. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



Mt. Guramba Sidama
Dec 24, 1926 -

Haploiderma n. narina

NARINA TROGON

NILE HELMET SHRIKE

Prionops concinnata Sundevall

(Four-fifths natural size)

The helmet shrikes are of restless disposition and travel about in flocks through the open woods, keeping in nearly continuous motion.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

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No. 27. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



15 MILES WEST
OF LAKE T'SANA.
APRIL 6, 1929-

Priodops cinnamomea

NILE HELMET SHRIKE

THICK-BILLED RAVEN

Corvultur crassirostris (Rüppell)

(Four-fifths natural size)

This strikingly marked bird belongs to the crow family but is vulturine in habits and commonly feeds on carrion in company with the vultures and kites. It frequents villages and camps where it acts as a scavenger.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

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No. 28. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



THICK-BILLED RAVEN

ABYSSINIAN WOLF

Canis simensis Rüppell

(Four-fifths natural size)

This is a long-legged and slender-snouted canine found only in the mountains of Abyssinia. Although foxlike in its color, it is wolflike in habits, at least to the extent of going in small packs. It subsists mainly on small rodents.

Painted from life by

Louis Agassiz Fuyertes

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No. 29. Album of Abyssinian Birds and Mammals



"Kabaru"
(*Canis simensis*)
MT. Allasso.
Nov. 11, 1926
W. H. O.

ABYSSINIAN WOLF

GELADA BABOON

Theropithecus gelada Rüppell

Although most African baboons inhabit the warmer parts of the country, this one prefers high mountains where the climate is relatively cool. It frequents rocky peaks and walls of steep canyons, which it scales with incredible ease and speed.

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GELADA BABOON

GELADA BABOON

Theropithecus gelada Rüppell

(Four-fifths natural size)

The face of the gelada baboon does not have the doglike shape of other baboons. The nostrils are lateral instead of terminal, as in some of the smaller monkeys. There is no bright color in the face, but on the chest are naked areas of red.

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GELADA BABOON.
NUGGER CAÑON RIM. at "NULU".
A.M.B. Oct 21, 1926.



GELADA BABOON

ABYSSINIAN DUIKER

Sylvicapra abyssinicus Thomas

(Four-fifths natural size)

The duikers, of which there are many species in Africa, are small antelopes mostly less than twenty inches high. The name duiker is from the Dutch word meaning diver and refers to the reckless manner in which the animal leaps head first into a thicket when alarmed.

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ABYSSINIAN DUIKER