

As their early name implies, these swifts are all wings; accordingly the swiftness of their flight is such that the best shots make many misses and few hits. It took several rounds of ammunition for the five just added to the State collections. These specimens are all males, and inasmuch as their measurements differ slightly from published measurements, i. e., length 6.50-7.00 inches; extent, 14.00; they are given below for each bird:—

	No. 1.	No. 2.	No. 3.	No. 4.	No. 5.
Length,	6½	6¾	6½	6¾	6½
Expense,	14	14½	14¾	14¾	14

From the foregoing measurements it will be seen that, while the length is less, the expanse is greater than those published. These swifts were first observed by Professor Bruner while on a government entomological expedition in the summer of 1891. At the direction of Professor Bruner his ornithological assistant, Mr. J. B. White, shot and prepared the above specimens this past summer. Being in charge of the Morrill geological expedition sent to this region by the University, I had occasion to fall in with Professor Bruner's party, and to observe these swifts personally. We must have seen several hundred at Squaw Canon flying in and out among the buttes which rise with nearly vertical walls five hundred to twelve hundred feet above the Hot Creek Basin.

Having occasion to visit this region several times annually with parties of students, it is to be hoped that we may obtain data for further notes, and that it may be possible to secure their nests and eggs, in spite of their inaccessible abodes.

ERWIN H. BARBOUR.

University of Nebraska, Sept. 30.

#### Star 1830 Groombridge.

In *Science* for Sept. 30, I note the letter of Professor A. W. Williamson, in which he propounds an hypothesis, admitted by himself to be forced and unwarranted by any natural facts, to

account for the incredible velocity attributed to the Star 1830 of Groombridge's catalogue. It is not necessary to resort to such untenable speculations to explain the phenomena referred to. The only reason for assigning such an extreme velocity to the star in question is the fact that it exhibits quite a large proper motion and no appreciable parallax. It may be, however, merely a case of masked parallax. If we suppose the star to have a large dark companion (numerous instances of which are known, as Algol, Procyon, etc.), we only need to assign to it a period and radius of revolution closely approximating that of the earth in its orbit, and a favorable position of orbital plane, to render the parallax quite imperceptible by the old methods. In such case the spectroscope might solve the problem by determining the orbital velocity, and thence the other elements, in case the plane of the orbit lay in our direction, and thus show that this star is really one of the nearest in the heavens to our system.

HENRY H. BATES.

Washington, D.C., Oct. 5.

#### Dr. Brendel's Photographs of Auroras.

In your issue of July 22, 1892, you copied from *The Scottish Geographical Magazine* an interesting notice of the expedition made by Dr. Martin Brendel and Herr O. Baschin to Bossekop on the northern coast of Norway, last winter, to study the northern lights and attendant phenomena. Therein mention was made of the photographs of the aurora obtained by Dr. Brendel.

By his courtesy copies of some of these pictures are before me. Dr. Brendel modestly regards them as valuable chiefly for what they promise for the future. He hopes to visit the Arctic regions again with a much better equipment. But he has already achieved a great feat in securing even these photographs, the first of the kind ever taken. Tromholt's attempt in 1885 cannot be regarded as a success. The faintness of the light, the quivering and shifting of the auroral rays, and the non-actinic quality of certain colors, combine to make this a very difficult task. Dr. Brendel

#### Reading Matter Notices.

Ripans Tabules: for torpid liver.  
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By ALPHEUS SPRING PACKARD, M.D., Ph.D.

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Much pains has been taken to render the bibliography complete, and the author is indebted to Dr. Franz Boas and others for several titles and important suggestions; and it is hoped that this feature of the book will recommend it to collectors of *Americana*.

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