

Birds of many kinds are extremely abundant on the undulating grassy plains around Maldonado. There are several species of a family allied in structure and manners to our Starling: one of these (*Molothrus niger*) is remarkable from its habits. Several may often be seen standing together on the back of a cow or horse; and while perched on a hedge, pluming themselves in the sun, they sometimes attempt to sing, or rather to hiss; the noise being very peculiar, resembling that of bubbles of air passing rapidly from a small orifice under water, so as to produce an acute sound. According to Azara, this bird, like the cuckoo, deposits its eggs in other birds' nests. I was several times told by the country people that there certainly is some bird having this habit; and my assistant in collecting, who is a very accurate person, found a nest of the sparrow of this country (*Zonotrichia matutina*) with one egg in it larger than the others, and of a different color and shape. In North America there is another species of *Molothrus* (*M. pecoris*), which has a similar cuckoo-like habit, and which is most closely allied in every respect to the species from the Plata, even in such trifling peculiarities as standing on the backs of cattle; it differs only in being a little smaller, and in its plumage and eggs being of a slightly different shade of color. This close agreement in structure and habits, in representative species coming from opposite quarters of a great continent, always strikes one as interesting, though of common occurrence.

Mr. Swainson has well remarked¹ that, with the exception of the *Molothrus pecoris*, to which must be added the *M. niger*, the cuckoos are the only birds which can be called truly parasitical; namely, such as "fasten themselves, as it were, on another living animal, whose animal heat brings their young into life, whose food they live upon, and whose death would cause theirs during the period of infancy." It is remarkable that some of the species, but not all, both of the Cuckoo and *Molothrus*, should agree in this one strange

¹ Magazine of Zoölogy and Botany, vol. i. p. 217.