Ridgway Collection

Courtney, Mo. Feb. 1, 1898

Prof. Robert Ridgway:

My much respected Friend:

Your very kind letter of Dec. 30th was read with great pleasure, as a notice of any article of mine, by so eminent an author as yourself is an undisputed compliment. You will epeuse me for not acknowledging the receipt of your letter sooner, but an unusual amount of business has prevented me until now. You will pardon me for addressing you as a friend when you learn that for many years I have known you by your works, and read all that I could get. I have the "Birds of Illinois", which Prof. Forbes was kind enough to send me at the Mo. Botanical Garden, and I often refer to it when I secure some new bird about here. Your large work, "Birds of North America", I have often consulted, but do not own myself, for the price is more than I can afford as yet. I have collected birds all over Missouri, and it was I who first brought to light the wonderful fauna and flora of Southeastern Mo. I first attracted the attention of Mr. Widmann, my friend, to the probabilities of bird discovery in that peculiar region, and the result was that the breeding place of Bachman's Warbler is now known. So you see you are like an old friend to me, although, perhaps, you never heard of me before. As to your Ash near Mt. Carmel, Illinois, I feel satisfied that it is the Punkin Ash, from your description of it and the habitat. The plants you mention as found

growing in these swales, are the same precisely that we find with Fraxinus profunda in Southeastern Missouri. I shall write to Dr. Schneck to collect me some good fruiting specimens of your Ash the coming season that we may be positive about it. The Pumpkin Ash is so different in looks and in habitat that I now wonder why I placed it with the White Ash, but I suppose that was owing to my extreme caution in making a new species in a genus that was thought to be so well known and so limited. I regard this feeling now as detrimental to the best interests of science, for we should not hesitate when we find something that is constantly different from other forms, to give it a distinctive name. I am very glad you wrote me about the Pumpkin Ash, as we now know more of its range than we did, and of all that have written me about it, you are the only one that is reasonably correct. Mr. Beadle of Biltmore sends me an Ash he has been calling Fraxinus profunda, but which is not anything like it, and which apparently is an undescribed species. So you see my poor article has been of some good if it has brought out some good. Hoping I have not been presumptious in writing you, I beg to remain

Yours very respectfully

B. F. Bush.