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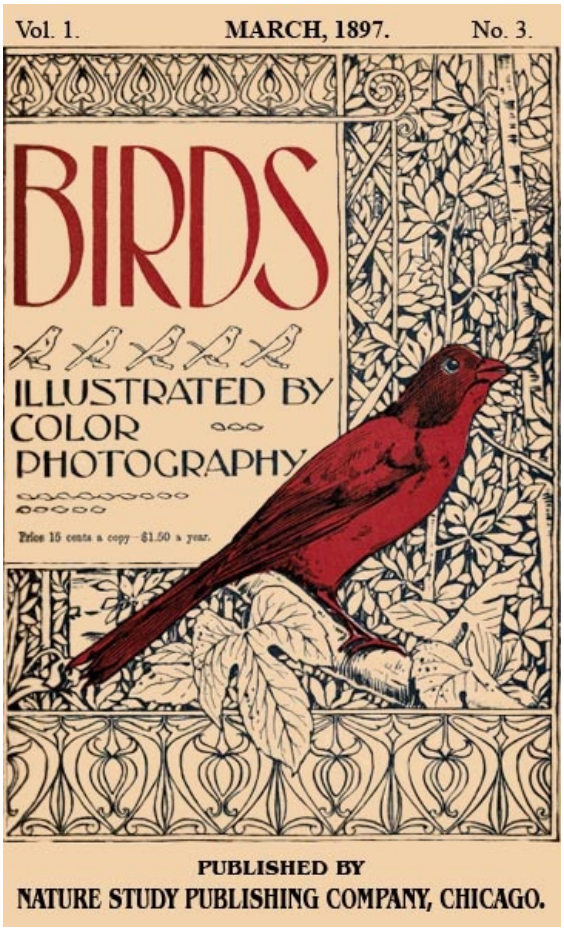
*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BIRDS, ILLUSTRATED BY COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY, VOL. 1, NO. 3 ***



FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION.

STATE OF NEW YORK
Department of Public Instruction
SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE
Albany December 26, 1896.

Stenographic Letter
Dictated by

W. E. Watt, President &c.,

Fisher Building,

277 Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.

My dear Sir:

Please accept my thanks for a copy of the first publication of “Birds.” Please enter my name as a regular subscriber. It is one of the most beautiful and interesting publications yet attempted in this direction. It has other attractions in addition to its beauty, and it must win its way to popular favor.

Wishing the handsome little magazine abundant prosperity, I remain

Yours very respectfully,

Charles [illegible]

State Superintendent.

LITTLE BOY BLUE.

Boys and girls, don’t you think that is a pretty name? I came from the warm south, where I went last winter, to tell you that Springtime is nearly here.

When I sing, the buds and flowers and grass all begin to whisper to one another, “Springtime is coming for we heard the Bluebird say so,” and then they peep out to see the warm sunshine. I perch beside them and tell them of my long journey from the south and how I knew just when to tell them to come out of their warm winter cradles. I am of the same blue color as the violet that shows her pretty face when I sing, “Summer is coming, and Springtime is here.”

I do not like the cities for they are black and noisy and full of those troublesome birds called English Sparrows. I take my pretty mate and out in the beautiful country we find a home. We build a nest of twigs, grass and hair, in a box that the farmer puts up for us near his barn.

Sometimes we build in a hole in some old tree and soon there are tiny eggs in the nest. I sing to my mate and to the good people who own the barn. I heard the farmer say one day, “Isn’t it nice to hear the Bluebird sing? He must be very happy.” And I am, too, for by this time there are four or five little ones in the nest.

Little Bluebirds are like little boys—they are always hungry. We work hard to find enough for them to eat. We feed them nice fat worms and bugs, and when their little wings are strong enough, we teach them how to fly. Soon they are large enough to hunt their own food, and can take care of themselves.

The summer passes, and when we feel the breath of winter we go south again, for we do not like the cold.

THE BLUE BIRD.

I know the song that the Bluebird is singing
Out in the apple tree, where he is swinging.
Brave little fellow! the skies may be dreary,
Nothing cares he while his heart is so cheery.
Hark! how the music leaps out from his throat,
Hark! was there ever so merry a note?

Listen a while, and you’ll hear what he’s saying,
Up in the apple tree swinging and swaying.
“Dear little blossoms down under the snow,
You must be weary of winter, I know;
Hark! while I sing you a message of cheer,
Summer is coming, and springtime is here!”

“Dear little snow-drop! I pray you arise;
Bright yellow crocus! come open your eyes;
Sweet little violets, hid from the cold,
Put on our mantles of purple and gold;
Daffodils! daffodils! say, do you hear,
Summer is coming! and springtime is here!”

BLUE BIRD.

THE BLUE BIRD.

Winged lute that we call a blue bird,
You blend in a silver strain
The sound of the laughing waters,
The patter of spring's sweet rain,
The voice of the wind, the sunshine,
And fragrance of blossoming things,
Ah! you are a poem of April
That God endowed with wings. E. E. R.

LIKE a bit of sky this little harbinger of spring appears, as we see him and his mate househunting in early March. Oftentimes he makes his appearance as early as the middle of February, when his attractive note is heard long before he himself is seen. He is one of the last to leave us, and although the month of November is usually chosen by him as the fitting time for departure to a milder clime, his plaintive note is quite commonly heard on pleasant days throughout the winter season, and a few of the braver and hardier ones never entirely desert us. The Robin and the Blue Bird are tenderly associated in the memories of most persons whose childhood was passed on a farm or in the country village. Before the advent of the English Sparrow, the Blue Bird was sure to be the first to occupy and the last to defend the little box prepared for his return, appearing in his blue jacket somewhat in advance of the plainly habited female, who on her arrival quite often found a habitation selected and ready for her acceptance, should he find favor in her sight. And then he becomes a most devoted husband and father, sitting by the nest and warbling with earnest affection his exquisite tune, and occasionally flying away in search of food for his mate and nestlings.

The Blue Bird rears two broods in the season, and, should the weather be mild, even three. His nest contains three eggs.

In the spring and summer when he is happy and gay, his song is extremely soft and agreeable, while it grows very mournful and plaintive as cold weather approaches. He is mild of temper, and a peaceable and harmless neighbor, setting a fine example of amiability to his feathered friends. In the early spring, however, he wages war

against robins, wrens, swallows, and other birds whose habitations are of a kind to take his fancy. A celebrated naturalist says: “This bird seems incapable of uttering a harsh note, or of doing a spiteful, ill-tempered thing.”

Nearly everybody has his anecdote to tell of the Blue Bird’s courage, but the author of “Wake Robin” tells his exquisitely thus: “A few years ago I put up a little bird house in the back end of my garden for the accommodation of the wrens, and every season a pair have taken up their abode there. One spring a pair of Blue Birds looked into the tenement, and lingered about several days, leading me to hope that they would conclude to occupy it. But they finally went away. Late in the season the wrens appeared, and after a little coquetting, were regularly installed in their old quarters, and were as happy as only wrens can be. But before their honeymoon was over, the Blue Birds returned. I knew something was wrong before I was up in the morning. Instead of that voluble and gushing song outside the window, I heard the wrens scolding and crying out at a fearful rate, and on going out saw the Blue Birds in possession of the box. The poor wrens were in despair and were forced to look for other quarters.”

THE SWALLOW.

“Come, summer visitant, attach
  To my reedroof thy nest of clay,
And let my ear thy music catch,
Low twitting underneath the thatch,
  At the gray dawn of day.”

SURE harbingers of spring are the Swallows. They are very common birds, and frequent, as a rule, the cultivated lands in the neighborhood of water, showing a decided preference for the habitations of man. “How gracefully the swallows fly! See them coursing over the daisy-bespangled grass fields; now they skim just over the blades of grass, and then with a rapid stroke of their long wings mount into the air and come hovering above your head, displaying their rich white and chestnut plumage to perfection. Now they chase each other for very joyfulness, uttering their sharp twittering notes; then they hover with expanded wings like miniature Kestrels, or dart downwards with the velocity of the sparrowhawk; anon they flit rapidly over the neighboring pool, occasionally dipping themselves in its calm and placid waters, and leaving a long train of rings marking their varied course. How easily they turn, or glide over the surrounding hedges, never resting, never weary, and defying the eye to trace them in the infinite turnings and twistings of their rapid shooting flight. You frequently see them glide rapidly near the ground, and then with a sidelong motion mount aloft, to dart downwards like an animated meteor, their plumage glowing in the light with metallic splendor, and the row of white spots on the tail contrasting beautifully with the darker plumage.”

The Swallow is considered a life-paired species, and returns to its nesting site of the previous season, building a new nest close to the old one. His nest is found in barns and outhouses, upon the beams of wood which support the roof, or in any place which assures protection to the young birds. It is cup-shaped and artfully moulded of bits of mud. Grass and feathers are used for the lining. “The nest completed, five or six eggs are deposited. They are of a pure white color, with deep rich brown blotches and spots, notably at the larger end, round which they often form a zone or belt.” The sitting bird is fed by her mate.

The young Swallow is distinguished from the mature birds by the absence of the elongated tail feathers, which are a mark of maturity alone. His food is composed entirely of insects. Swallows are on the wing fully sixteen hours, and the greater part of the time making terrible havoc amongst the millions of insects which infest the air. It is said that when the Swallow is seen flying high in the heavens, it is a never failing indication of fine weather.

A pair of Swallows on arriving at their nesting place of the preceding Summer found their nest occupied by a Sparrow, who kept the poor birds at a distance by pecking at them with his strong beak whenever they attempted to dislodge him. Wearied and hopeless of regaining possession of their property, they at last hit upon a plan which effectually punished the intruder. One morning they appeared with a few more Swallows—their mouths filled with a supply of tempered clay—and, by their joint efforts in a short time actually plastered up the entrance to the hole, thus barring the Sparrow from the home which he had stolen from the Swallows.

BARN SWALLOW.

THE BROWN THRUSH.

"However the world goes ill,
The Thrushes still sing in it."

THE Mocking-bird of the North, as the Brown Thrush has been called, arrives in the Eastern and Middle States about the 10th of May, at which season he may be seen, perched on the highest twig of a hedge, or on the topmost branch of a tree, singing his loud and welcome song, that may be heard a distance of half a mile. The favorite haunt of the Brown Thrush, however, is amongst the bright and glossy foliage of the evergreens. "There they delight to hide, although not so shy and retiring as the Blackbird; there they build their nests in greatest numbers, amongst the perennial foliage, and there they draw at nightfall to repose in warmth and safety." The Brown Thrasher sings chiefly just after sunrise and before sunset, but may be heard singing at intervals during the day. His food consists of wild fruits, such as blackberries and raspberries, snails, worms, slugs and grubs. He also obtains much of his food amongst the withered leaves and marshy places of the woods and shrubberies which he frequents. Few birds possess a more varied melody. His notes are almost endless in variety, each note seemingly uttered at the caprice of the bird, without any perceptible approach to order.

The site of the Thrush's nest is a varied one, in the hedgerows, under a fallen tree or fence-rail; far up in the branches of stately trees, or amongst the ivy growing up their trunks. The nest is composed of the small dead twigs of trees, lined with the fine fibers of roots. From three to five eggs are deposited, and are hatched in about twelve days. They have a greenish background, thickly spotted with light brown, giving the whole egg a brownish appearance.

The Brown Thrush leaves the Eastern and Middle States, on his migration South, late in September, remaining until the following May.

THE THRUSH'S NEST.

"Within a thick and spreading hawthorn bush
That overhung a molehill, large and round,
I heard from morn to morn a merry thrush
Sing hymns of rapture while I drank the sound
With joy—and oft an unintruding guest,
I watched her secret toils from day to day;
How true she warped the moss to form her nest,
And modeled it within with wood and clay.

And by and by, with heath-bells gilt with dew,
There lay her shining eggs as bright as flowers,
Ink-spotted over, shells of green and blue:
And there I witnessed, in the summer hours,
A brood of nature’s minstrels chirp and fly,
Glad as the sunshine and the laughing sky.”

THE BROWN THRUSH.

Dear Readers:

My cousin Robin Redbreast told me that he wrote you a letter last month and sent it with his picture. How did you like it? He is a pretty bird—Cousin Robin—and everybody likes him. But I must tell you something of myself.

Folks call me by different names—some of them nicknames, too.

The cutest one of all is Brown Thrasher. I wonder if you know why they call me Thrasher. If you don’t, ask some one. It is really funny.

Some people think Cousin Robin is the sweetest singer of our family, but a great many like my song just as well.

Early in the morning I sing among the bushes, but later in the day you will always find me in the very top of a tree and it is then I sing my best.

Do you know what I say in my song? Well, if I am near a farmer while he is planting, I say: “Drop it, drop it—cover it up, cover it up—pull it up, pull it up, pull it up.”

One thing I very seldom do and that is, sing when near my nest. Maybe you can tell why. I’m not very far from my nest now. I just came down to the stream to get a drink and am watching that boy on the other side of the stream. Do you see him?

One dear lady who loves birds has said some very nice things about me in a book called “Bird Ways.” Another lady has written a beautiful poem about my singing. Ask your mamma or teacher the names of these ladies. Here is the poem:

There’s a merry brown thrush sitting up in a tree.
He is singing to me! He is singing to me!
And what does he say—little girl, little boy?
“Oh, the world’s running over with joy!
Hush! Look! In my tree,
I am as happy as happy can be.”

And the brown thrush keeps singing, “A nest, do you see,
And five eggs, hid by me in the big cherry tree?
Don’t meddle, don’t touch—little girl, little boy—
Or the world will lose some of its joy!
Now I am glad! now I am free!
And I always shall be,
If you never bring sorrow to me.”

So the merry brown thrush sings away in the tree
To you and to me—to you and to me;
And he sings all the day—little girl, little boy—
“Oh, the world’s running over with joy!
But long it won’t be,
Don’t you know? don’t you see?
Unless we’re good as good can be.”

BROWN THRASHER.

JAPAN PHEASANT.

THE JAPAN PHEASANT.

ORIGINALLY the Pheasant was an inhabitant of Asia Minor but has been by degrees introduced into many countries, where its beauty of form, plumage, and the delicacy of its flesh made it a welcome visitor. The Japan Pheasant is a very beautiful species, about which little is known in its wild state, but in captivity it is pugnacious. It requires much shelter and plenty of food, and the breed is to some degree artificially kept up by the hatching of eggs under domestic hens and feeding them in the coop like ordinary chickens, until they are old and strong enough to get their own living.

The food of this bird is extremely varied. When young it is generally fed on ants' eggs, maggots, grits, and similar food, but when it is full grown it is possessed of an accommodating appetite and will eat many kinds of seeds, roots, and leaves. It will also eat beans, peas, acorns, berries, and has even been known to eat the ivy leaf, as well as the berry.

This Pheasant loves the ground, runs with great speed, and always prefers to trust to its legs rather than to its wings. It is crafty, and when alarmed it slips quickly out of sight behind a bush or through a hedge, and then runs away with astonishing rapidity, always remaining under cover until it reaches some spot where it deems

itself safe. The male is not domestic, passing an independent life during a part of the year and associating with others of its own sex during the rest of the season.

The nest is very rude, being merely a heap of leaves and grass on the ground, with a very slight depression. The eggs are numerous, about eleven or twelve, and olive brown in color. In total length, though they vary considerably, the full grown male is about three feet. The female is smaller in size than her mate, and her length a foot less.

The Japan Pheasant is not a particularly interesting bird aside from his beauty, which is indeed brilliant, there being few of the species more attractive.

THE FLICKER.

A GREAT variety of names does this bird possess. It is commonly known as the Golden Winged Woodpecker, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Yellow Hammer, and less often as High-hole or High-holer, Wake-up, etc. In suitable localities throughout the United States and the southern parts of Canada, the Flicker is a very common bird, and few species are more generally known. “It is one of the most sociable of our Woodpeckers, and is apparently always on good terms with its neighbors. It usually arrives in April, occasionally even in March, the males preceding the females a few days, and as soon as the latter appear one can hear their voices in all directions.”

The Flicker is an ardent wooer. It is an exceedingly interesting and amusing sight to see a couple of males paying their addresses to a coy and coquettish female; the apparent shyness of the suitors as they sidle up to her and as quickly retreat again, the shy glances given as one peeps from behind a limb watching the other—playing bo-peep—seem very human, and “I have seen,” says an observer, “few more amusing performances than the courtship of a pair of these birds.” The defeated suitor takes his rejection quite philosophically, and retreats in a dignified manner, probably to make other trials elsewhere. Few birds deserve our good will more than the Flicker. He is exceedingly useful, destroying multitudes of grubs, larvæ, and worms. He loves berries and fruit but the damage he does to cultivated fruit is very trifling.

The Flicker begins to build its nest about two weeks after the bird arrives from the south. It prefers open country, interspersed with groves and orchards, to nest in. Any old stump, or partly decayed limb of a tree, along the banks of a creek, beside a country road, or in an old orchard, will answer the purpose. Soft wood trees seem to be preferred, however. In the prairie states it occasionally selects strange nesting sites. It has been known to chisel through the weather boarding of a dwelling house, barns, and other buildings, and to nest in the hollow space between this and the cross beams; its nests have also been found in gate posts, in church towers, and in burrows of Kingfishers and bank swallows, in perpendicular banks of streams. One of the most peculiar sites of his selection is described by William A. Bryant as follows: “On a small hill, a quarter of a mile distant from any home, stood a hay stack which had been placed there two years previously. The owner, during the winter of 1889-90, had cut the stack through the middle and hauled away one portion, leaving the other standing, with the end smoothly trimmed. The following spring I noticed a pair of flickers about the stack showing signs of wanting to make it a fixed habitation. One morning a few days later I was amused at the efforts of one of the pair. It was clinging to the perpendicular end of the stack and throwing out clipped hay at a rate to defy competition. This work continued for a week, and in that time the pair had excavated a cavity twenty inches in depth. They remained in the vicinity until autumn. During the winter the remainder of the stack was removed. They returned the following spring, and, after a brief sojourn, departed for parts unknown.”

From five to nine eggs are generally laid. They are glossy white in color, and when fresh appear as if enameled.

The young are able to leave the nest in about sixteen days; they crawl about on the limbs of the tree for a couple of days before they venture to fly, and return to the nest at night.

FLICKER.

THE BOBOLINK.

"When Nature had made all her birds,
And had no cares to think on,
She gave a rippling laugh,
And out there flew a Bobolinkon."

NO American ornithologist omits mention of the Bobolink, and naturalists generally have described him under one of the many names by which he is known. In some States he is called the Rice Bird, in others Reed Bird, the Rice or Reed Bunting, while his more familiar title, throughout the greater part of America, is Bobolink, or Bobolinkum. In Jamaica, where he gets very fat during his winter stay, he is called the Butter Bird. His title of Rice Troopial is earned by the depredations which he annually makes upon the rice crops, though his food "is by no means restricted to that seed, but consists in a large degree of insects, grubs, and various wild grasses." A migratory bird, residing during the winter in the southern parts of America, he returns in vast multitudes northward in the early Spring. According to Wilson, their course of migration is as follows: "In April, or very early in May, the Rice Buntings, male and female, arrive within the southern boundaries of the United States, and are seen around the town of Savannah, Georgia, sometimes in separate parties of males and females, but more generally promiscuously. They remain there but a short time, and about the middle of May make their appearance in the lower part of Pennsylvania. While here the males are extremely gay and full of song, frequenting meadows, newly plowed fields, sides of creeks, rivers, and watery places, feeding on May flies and caterpillars, of which they destroy great quantities. In their passage, however, through Virginia at this season, they do great damage to the early wheat and barley while in their milky state. About the 20th of May they disappear on their way to the North. Nearly at the same time they arrive in the State of New York, spread over the whole of the New England States, as far as the river St. Lawrence, and from Lake Ontario to the sea. In all of these places they remain during the Summer, building their nests and rearing their young."

The Bobolink's song is a peculiar one, varying greatly with the occasion. As he flys southward, his cry is a kind of clinking note; but the love song addressed to his mate is voluble and fervent. It has been said that if you should strike the keys of a pianoforte haphazard, the higher and the lower singly very quickly, you might have some idea of the Bobolink's notes. In the month of June he gradually changes his pretty, attractive dress and puts on one very like the females, which is of a plain rusty brown, and is not reassumed until the next season of nesting. The two parent birds in the plate represent the change from the dark plumage in which the bird is commonly known in the North as the Bobolink, to the dress of yellowish brown by which it is known throughout the South as the Rice or Reed Bird.

His nest, small and a plain one, too, is built on the ground by his industrious little wife. The inside is warmly lined with soft fibers of whatever may be nearest at hand. Five pretty white eggs, spotted all over with brown are laid, and as soon

> “As the little ones chip the shell
> And five wide mouths are ready for food,
> ‘Robert of Lincoln’ bestirs him well,
> Gathering seeds for this hungry brood.”

BOBOLINK.

Other birds may like to travel alone, but when jolly Mr. Bobolink and his quiet little wife come from the South, where they have spent the winter, they come with a large party of friends. When South, they eat so much rice that the people call them Rice Birds. When they come North, they enjoy eating wheat, barley, oats and insects.

Mr. and Mrs. Bobolink build their simple little nest of grasses in some field. It is hard to find on the ground, for it looks just like dry grass. Mrs. Bobolink wears a dull dress, so she cannot be seen when she is sitting on the precious eggs. She does not sing a note while caring for the eggs. Why do you think that is?

Mr. Bob-Linkum does not wear a sober dress, as you can see by his picture. He does not need to be hidden. He is just as jolly as he looks. Shall I tell you how he amuses his mate while she is sitting? He springs from the dew-wet grass with a sound like peals of merry laughter. He frolics from reed to post, singing as if his little heart would burst with joy.

Don’t you think Mr. and Mrs. Bobolink look happy in the picture? They have raised their family of five. Four of their children have gone to look for food; one of them—he must surely be the baby—would rather stay with his mamma and papa. Which one does he look like?

Many birds are quiet at noon and in the afternoon. A flock of Bobolinks can be heard singing almost all day long. The song is full of high notes and low, soft notes and loud, all sung rapidly. It is as gay and bright as the birds themselves, who flit about playfully as they sing. You will feel like laughing as merrily as they sing when you hear it some day.

BOBOLINKS.

THE BLUE BIRD.

> “Drifting down the first warm wind
> That thrills the earliest days of spring,
> The Bluebird seeks our maple groves
> And charms them into tasselling.”

"He sings, and his is Nature's voice—
A gush of melody sincere
From that great fount of harmony
Which thaws and runs when Spring is here."

"Short is his song, but strangely sweet
To ears aweary of the low
Dull tramps of Winter's sullen feet,
Sandalled in ice and muffled in snow."

"Think, every morning, when the sun peeps through
The dim, leaf-latticed windows of the grove,
How jubilant the happy birds renew
Their old, melodious madrigals of love!
And when you think of this, remember, too,
'Tis always morning somewhere, and above
The awakening continents, from shore to shore,
Somewhere the birds are singing evermore.

"Think of your woods and orchards without birds!
Of empty nests that cling to boughs and beams
As in an idiot's brain remembered words
Hang empty 'mid the cobwebs of his dreams!
Will bleat of flocks or bellowing of herds
Make up for the lost music, when your teams
Drag home the stingy harvest, and no more
The feathered gleaners follow to your door?"

FROM "THE BIRDS OF KILLINGSWORTH."

THE CROW.

Caw! Caw! Caw! little boys and girls. Caw! Caw! Caw! Just look at my coat of feathers. See how black and glossy it is. Do you wonder I am proud of it?

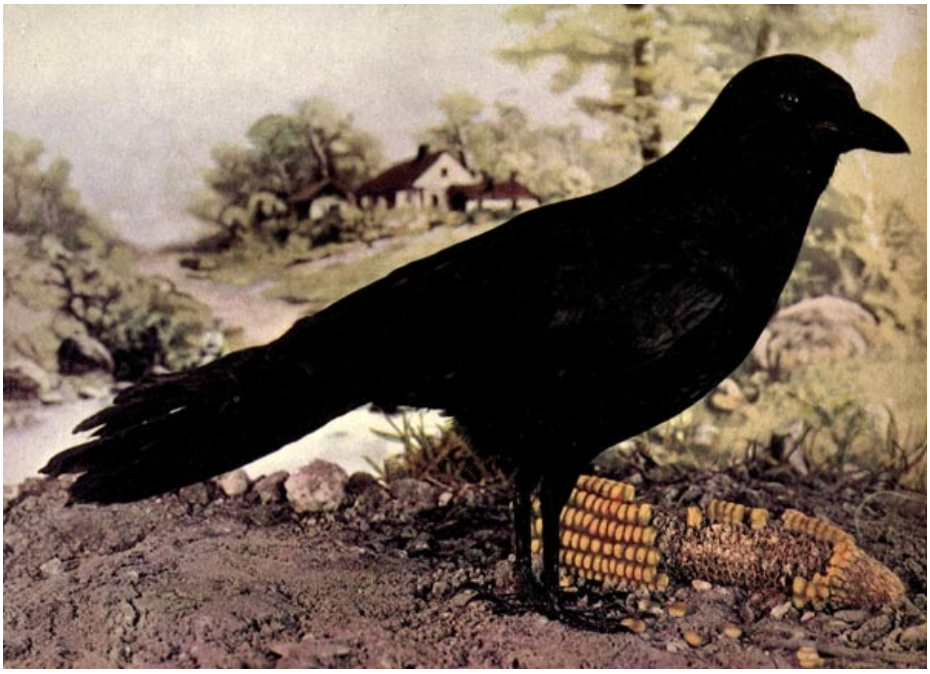
Perhaps you think I look very solemn and wise, and not at all as if I cared to play games. I do, though; and one of the games I like best is hide-and-seek. I play it with the farmer in the spring. He hides, in the rich, brown earth, golden kernels of corn. Surely he does it because he knows I like it, for sometimes he puts up a stick all dressed like a man to show where the corn is hidden. Sometimes I push my bill down into the earth to find the corn, and at other times I wait until tiny green leaves begin to show above the ground, and then I get my breakfast without much trouble. I wonder if the farmer enjoys this game as much as I do. I help him, too, by eating worms and insects.

During the spring and summer I live in my nest on the top of a very high tree. It is built of sticks and grasses and straw and string and anything else I can pick up. But in the fall, I and all my relations and friends live together in great roosts or rookeries. What good times we do have—hunting all day for food and talking all night. Wouldn't you like to be with us?

The farmer who lives in the house over there went to the mill to-day with a load of corn.

One of the ears dropped out of the wagon and it didn't take me long to find it. I have eaten all I can possibly hold and am wondering now what is the best thing to do. If you were in my place would you leave it here and not tell anybody and come back to-morrow and finish it? Or would you fly off and get Mrs. Crow and some of the children to come and finish it? I believe I'll fly and get them. Good-bye.

Caw! Caw! Caw!



COMMON CROW.

THE COMMON CROW.

"The crow doth sing as merry as the lark,
When neither is attended."

FEW birds have more interesting characteristics than the Common Crow, being, in many of his actions, very like the Raven, especially in his love for carrion. Like the Raven, he has been known to attack game, although his inferior size forces him to call to his assistance the aid of his fellows to cope with larger creatures. Rabbits and hares are frequently the prey of this bird which pounces on them as they steal abroad to feed. His food consists of reptiles, frogs, and lizards; he is a plunderer of other birds' nests. On the seashore he finds crabs, shrimps and inhabited shells, which he ingeniously cracks by flying with them to a great height and letting them fall upon a convenient rock.

The crow is seen in single pairs or in little bands of four or five. In the autumn evenings, however, they assemble in considerable flocks before going to roost and make a wonderful chattering, as if comparing notes of the events of the day.

The nest of the Crow is placed in some tree remote from habitations of other birds. Although large and very conspicuous at a distance, it is fixed upon one of the topmost branches quite out of reach of the hand of the adventurous urchin who longs to secure its contents. It is loosely made and saucer shaped. Sticks and softer substances are used to construct it, and it is lined with hair and fibrous roots. Very recently a thrifty and intelligent Crow built for itself a summer residence in an airy tree near Bombay, the material used being gold, silver, and steel spectacle frames, which the bird had stolen from an optician of that city. Eighty-four frames had been used for this purpose, and they were so ingeniously woven together that the nest was quite a work of art. The eggs are variable, or rather individual, in their markings, and even in their size. The Crow rarely uses the same nest twice, although he frequently repairs to the same locality from year to year. He is remarkable for his attachment to his mate and young, surpassing the Fawn and Turtle Dove in conjugal courtesy.

The Somali Arabs bear a deadly hatred toward the Crow. The origin of their detestation is the superstition that during the flight of Mohammed from his enemies, he hid himself in a cave, where he was perceived by the Crow, at that time a bird of light plumage, who, when he saw the pursuers approaching the spot, perched above Mohammed's hiding place, and screamed, "Ghar! Ghar!" (cave! cave!) so as to indicate the place of concealment. His enemies, however, did not understand the bird, and passed on, and Mohammed, when he came out of the cave, clothed the Crow in perpetual black, and commanded him to cry "Ghar" as long as Crows should live.

And he lives to a good old age. Instances are not rare where he has attained to half a century, without great loss of activity or failure of sight.

At Red Bank, a few miles northeast of Cincinnati, on the Little Miami River, in the bottoms, large flocks of Crows congregate the year around. A few miles away, high upon Walnut Hills, is a Crow roost, and in the late afternoons the Crows, singly, in pairs, and in flocks, are seen on the wing, flying heavily, with full crops, on the way to the roost, from which they descend in the early morning, crying “Caw! Caw!” to the fields of the newly planted, growing, or matured corn, or corn stacks, as the season may provide.

THE RETURN OF THE BIRDS.

> “Everywhere the blue sky belongs to them and is their appointed rest, and their native country, and their own natural home which they enter unannounced as lords that are certainly expected, and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.”

THE return of the birds to their real home in the North, where they build their nests and rear their young, is regarded by all genuine lovers of earth’s messengers of gladness and gayety as one of the most interesting and poetical of annual occurrences. The naturalist, who notes the very day of each arrival, in order that he may verify former observation or add to his material gathered for a new work, does not necessarily anticipate with greater pleasure this event than do many whose lives are brightened by the coming of the friends of their youth, who alone of early companions do not change. First of all—and ever the same delightful warbler—the Bluebird, who, in 1895, did not appear at all in many localities, though here in considerable numbers last year, betrays himself. “Did he come down out of the heaven on that bright March morning when he told us so softly and plaintively that, if we pleased, spring had come?” Sometimes he is here a little earlier, and must keep his courage up until the cold snap is over and the snow is gone. Not long after the Bluebird, comes the Robin, sometimes in March, but in most of the northern states April is the month of his arrival. With his first utterance the spell of winter is broken, and the remembrance of it afar off. Then appears the Woodpecker in great variety, the Flicker usually arriving first. He is always somebody’s old favorite, “announcing his arrival by a long, loud call, repeated from the dry branch of some tree, or a stake in the fence—a thoroughly melodious April sound.”

Few perhaps reflect upon the difficulties encountered by the birds themselves in their returning migrations. A voyager sometimes meets with many of our common birds far out at sea. Such wanderers, it is said, when suddenly overtaken by a fog, completely lose their sense of direction and become hopelessly lost. Humming birds, those delicately organized, glittering gems, are among the most common of the land species seen at sea.

The present season has been quite favorable to the protection of birds. A very competent observer says that not all of the birds migrated this winter. He recently visited a farm less than an hour’s ride from Chicago, where he found the old place, as he relates it, “chucked full of Robins, Blackbirds, and Woodpeckers,” and others unknown to him. From this he inferred they would have been in Florida had indications predicted a severe winter. The trees of the south parks of Chicago, and those in suburban places, have had, darting through their branches during the months of December and January, nearly as many members of the Woodpecker tribe as were found there during the mating season in May last.

Alas, that the Robin will visit us in diminished numbers in the approaching spring. He has not been so common for a year or two as he was formerly, for the reason that the Robins died by thousands of starvation, owing to the freezing of their food supply in Tennessee during the protracted cold weather in the winter of 1895. It is indeed sad that this good Samaritan among birds should be defenseless against the severity of Nature, the common mother of us all. Nevertheless the return of the birds, in myriads or in single pairs, will be welcomed more and more, year by year, as intelligent love and appreciation of them shall possess the popular mind.

BLACK TERN.
Mother and Young with Eggs.

THE BLACK TERN.

"THE TERN," says Mr. F. M. Woodruff, of the Chicago Academy of Sciences, "is the only representative of the long-winged swimmers which commonly nests with us on our inland fresh water marshes, arriving early in May in its brooding plumage of sooty black. The color changes in the autumn to white, and a number of the adult birds may be found, in the latter part of July, dotted and streaked here and there with white. On the first of June, 1891, I found a large colony of Black Terns nesting on Hyde Lake, Cook County, Illinois. As I approached the marsh a few birds were seen flying high in the air, and, as I neared the nesting site, the flying birds gave notes of alarm, and presently the air was filled with the graceful forms of this beautiful little bird. They circled about me, darting down to within a few feet of my head, constantly uttering a harsh, screaming cry. As the eggs are laid upon the bare ground, which the brownish and blackish markings so closely resemble, I was at first unable to find the nests, and discovered that the only way to locate them was to stand quietly and watch the birds. When the Tern is passing over the nest it checks its flight, and poises for a moment on quivering wings. By keeping my eyes on this spot I found the nest with very little trouble. The complement of eggs, when the bird has not been disturbed, is usually three. These are laid in a saucer shaped structure of dead vegetation, which is scraped together, from the surface of the wet, boggy ground. The bird figured in the plate had placed its nest on the edge of an old muskrat house, and my attention was attracted to it by the fact that upon the edge of the rat house, where it had climbed to rest itself, was the body of a young dabchick, or piedbilled grebe, scarcely two and one-half inches long, and not twenty-four hours out of the egg, a beautiful little ball of blackish down, striped with brown and white. From the latter part of July to the middle of August large flocks of Black Terns may be seen on the shores of our larger lakes on their annual migration southward."

The Rev. P. B. Peabody, in alluding to his observation of the nests of the Tern, says: "Amid this floating sea of aquatic nests I saw an unusual number of well constructed homes of the Tern. Among these was one that I count a perfect nest. It rested on the perfectly flat foundation of a small decayed rat house, which was about fourteen inches in diameter. The nest, in form, is a truncated cone (barring the cavity), was about eight inches high and ten inches in diameter. The hollow—quite shallow—was about seven inches across, being thus unusually large. The whole was built up of bits of rushes, carried to the spot, these being quite uniform in length—about four inches." After daily observation of the Tern, during which time he added much to his knowledge of the bird, he pertinently asks: "Who shall say how many traits and habits yet unknown may be discovered through patient watching of community-breeding birds, by men enjoying more of leisure for such delightful studies than often falls to the lot of most of us who have bread and butter to earn and a tiny part of the world's work to finish?"

THE MEADOW LARK.

“Not an inch of his body is free from delight.
Can he keep himself still if he would? Oh, not he!
The music stirs in him like wind through a tree.”

THE well known Meadow or Old Field Lark is a constant resident south of latitude 39, and many winter farther north in favorite localities. Its geographical range is eastern North America, Canada to south Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Ontario to eastern Manitoba; west to Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, eastern Kansas, the Indian Territory, and Texas; south to Florida and the Gulf coast, in all of which localities, except in the extreme north, it usually rears two or three broods in a season. In the Northern States it is only a summer resident, arriving in April and remaining until the latter part of October and occasionally November. Excepting during the breeding season, small flocks may often be seen roving about in search of good feeding grounds. Major Bendire says this is especially true in the fall of the year. At this time several families unite, and as many as two dozen may occasionally be flushed in a field, over which they scatter, roaming about independently of each other. When one takes wing all the others in the vicinity follow. It is a shy bird in the East, while in the middle states it is quite the reverse. Its flight is rather laborious, at least in starting, and is continued by a series of rapid movements of the wings, alternating with short distances of sailing, and is rarely protracted. On alighting, which is accompanied with a twitching of its tail, it usually settles on some fence rail, post, boulder, weedstock, or on a hillock in a meadow from which it can get a good view of the surroundings, and but rarely on a limb of a tree. Its favorite resorts are meadows, fallow fields, pastures, and clearings, but in some sections, as in northern Florida, for instance, it also frequents the low, open pine woods and nests there.

The song of the Meadow Lark is not much varied, but its clear, whistling notes, so frequently heard in the early spring, are melodious and pleasing to the ear. It is decidedly the farmers’ friend, feeding, as it does, on noxious insects, caterpillars, moths, grasshoppers, spiders, worms and the like, and eating but little grain. The lark spends the greater part of its time on the ground, procuring all its food there. It is seldom found alone, and it is said remains paired for life.

Nesting begins in the early part of May and lasts through June. Both sexes assist in building the nest, which is always placed on the ground, either in a natural depression, or in a little hollow scratched out by the birds, alongside a bunch of grass or weeds. The nest itself is lined with dry grass, stubble, and sometimes pine needles. Most nests are placed in level meadows. The eggs and young are frequently destroyed by vermin, for the meadow lark has many enemies. The eggs vary from three to seven, five being the most common, and both sexes assist in the hatching, which requires about fifteen or sixteen days. The young leave the nest before they are able to fly—hiding at the slightest sign of danger. The Meadow Lark does not migrate beyond the United States. It is a native bird, and is only accidental in England. The eggs are spotted, blotched, and speckled with shades of brown, purple and lavender. A curious incident is told of a Meadow Lark trying to alight on the top mast of a schooner several miles at sea. It was evidently very tired but would not venture near the deck.

MEADOW LARK.

THE MEADOW LARK.

I told the man who wanted my picture that he could take it if he would show my nest and eggs. Do you blame me for saying so? Don't you think it makes a better picture than if I stood alone?

Mr. Lark is away getting me some breakfast, or he could be in the picture, too. After a few days I shall have some little baby birds, and then won't we be happy.

Boys and girls who live in the country know us pretty well. When they drive the cows out to pasture, or when they go out to gather wild flowers, we sit on the fences by the roadside and make them glad with our merry song.

Those of you who live in the city cannot see us unless you come out into the country.

It isn't very often that we can find such a pretty place for a nest as we have here. Most of the time we build our nest under the grass and cover it over, and build a little tunnel leading to it. This year we made up our minds not to be afraid.

The people living in the houses over there do not bother us at all and we are so happy.

You never saw baby larks, did you? Well, they are queer little fellows, with hardly any feathers on them.

Last summer we had five little birdies to feed, and it kept us busy from morning till night. This year we only expect three, and Mr. Lark says he will do all the work. He knows a field that is being plowed, where he can get nice, large worms.

Hark! that is he singing. He will be surprised when he comes back and finds me off the nest. He is so afraid that I will let the eggs get cold, but I won't. There he comes, now.

THE LONG-EARED OWL.

THE name of the Long-Eared Owl is derived from the great length of his "ears" or feather-tufts, which are placed upon the head, and erect themselves whenever the bird is interested or excited. It is the "black sheep" of the owl family, the majority of owls being genuine friends of the agriculturist, catching for his larder so many of the small animals that prey upon his crops. In America he is called the Great Horned Owl—in Europe the Golden Owl.

Nesting time with the owl begins in February, and continues through March and April. The clown-like antics of both sexes of this bird while under the tender influence of the nesting season tend somewhat to impair their reputation for dignity and wise demeanor. They usually have a simple nest in a hollow tree, but which seems seldom to be built by the bird itself, as it prefers to take the deserted nest of some other bird, and to fit up the premises for its own use. They repair slightly from year to year the

same nest. The eggs are white, and generally four or five in number. While the young are still in the nest, the parent birds display a singular diligence in collecting food for them.

If you should happen to know of an owl's nest, stand near it some evening when the old birds are rearing their young. Keep quiet and motionless, and notice how frequently the old birds feed them. Every ten minutes or so the soft flap, flap of their wings will be heard, the male and female alternately, and you will obtain a brief glimpse of them through the gloom as they enter the nesting place. They remain inside but a short time, sharing the food equally amongst their brood, and then are off again to hunt for more. All night, were you to have the inclination to observe them, you would find they pass to and fro with food, only ceasing their labors at dawn. The young, as soon as they reach maturity, are abandoned by their parents; they quit the nest and seek out haunts elsewhere, while the old birds rear another, and not infrequently two more broods, during the remainder of the season.

The habits of the Long-Eared Owl are nocturnal. He is seldom seen in the light of day, and is greatly disturbed if he chance to issue from his concealment while the sun is above the horizon. The facial disk is very conspicuous in this species. It is said that the use of this circle is to collect the rays of light, and throw them upon the eye. The flight of the owl is softened by means of especially shaped, recurved feather-tips, so that he may noiselessly steal upon his prey, and the ear is also so shaped as to gather sounds from below.

The Long-Eared Owl is hardly tameable. The writer of this paragraph, when a boy, was the possessor, for more than a year, of a very fine specimen. We called him Judge. He was a monster, and of perfect plumage. Although he seemed to have some attachment to the children of the family who fed him, he would not permit himself to be handled by them or by any one in the slightest. Most of his time he spent in his cage, an immense affair, in which he was very comfortable. Occasionally he had a day in the barn with the rats and mice.

The owl is of great usefulness to gardener, agriculturist, and landowner alike, for there is not another bird of prey which is so great a destroyer of the enemies of vegetation.

GREAT HORNED OWL.

THE OWL.

We know not alway

Who are kings by day,
But the king of the night is the bold brown owl!

I wonder why the folks put my picture last in the book. It can't be because they don't like me, for I'm sure I never bother them. I don't eat the farmer's corn like the crow, and no one ever saw me quarrel with other birds.

Maybe it is because I can't sing. Well, there are lots of good people that can't sing, and so there are lots of good birds that can't sing.

Did you ever see any other bird sit up as straight as I do? I couldn't sit up so straight if I hadn't such long, sharp claws to hold on with.

My home is in the woods. Here we owls build our nests—most always in hollow trees.

During the day I stay in the nest or sit on a limb. I don't like day time for the light hurts my eyes, but when it begins to grow dark then I like to stir around. All night long I am wide awake and fly about getting food for my little hungry ones. They sleep most of the day and it keeps me busy nearly all night to find them enough to eat.

I just finished my night's work when the man came to take my picture. It was getting light and I told him to go to a large stump on the edge of the woods and I would sit for my picture. So here I am. Don't you think I look wise? How do you like my large eyes? If I could smile at you I would, but my face always looks sober. I have a great many cousins and if you really like my picture, I'll have some of them talk to you next month. I don't think any of them have such pretty feathers though. Just see if they have when they come.

Well, I must fly back to my perch in the old elm tree. Good-bye.

THE OWL.

In the hollow tree, in the old gray tower,
The spectral owl doth dwell;
Dull, hated, despised in the sunshine hour,
But at dusk he's abroad and well!
Not a bird of the forest e'er mates with him;
All mock him outright by day;
But at night, when the woods grow still and dim,
The boldest will shrink away!

O! when the night falls, and roosts the fowl,
Then, then, is the reign of the Horned Owl!

And the owl hath a bride, who is fond and bold,
And loveth the wood's deep gloom;
And, with eyes like the shine of the moonstone cold,
She awaiteth her ghastly groom.
Not a feather she moves, not a carol she sings,
As she waits in her tree so still,
But when her heart heareth his flapping wings,
She hoots out her welcome shrill!

O! when the moon shines, and dogs do howl,
Then, then, is the joy of the Horned Owl!

Mourn not for the owl, nor his gloomy plight!
The owl hath his share of good—
If a prisoner he be in the broad daylight,
He is lord in the dark greenwood!
Nor lonely the bird, nor his ghastly mate,
They are each unto each a pride;
Thrice fonder, perhaps, since a strange, dark fate
Hath rent them from all beside!

So, when the night falls, and dogs do howl,
Sing, Ho! for the reign of the Horned Owl!
We know not alway
Who are kings by day,
But the King of the Night is the bold Brown Owl!

BRYAN W. PROCTER
(Barry Cornwall.)

TESTIMONIALS.

FRANKFORT, KY., February 3, 1897.

W. J. BLACK, Vice-President,
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir: I have a copy of your magazine entitled “Birds,” and beg to say that I consider it one of the finest things on the subject that I have ever seen, and shall be pleased to recommend it to county and city superintendents of the state.

Very respectfully,
W. J. DAVIDSON,
State Superintendent Public Instruction.

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL., January 27, 1897.

W. J. BLACK, ESQ.,
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir: I am very much obliged for the copy of “Birds” that has just come to hand. It should be in the hands of every primary and grammar teacher. I send herewith copy of “List of San Francisco Teachers.”

Very respectfully,
M. BABCOCK.

LINCOLN, NEB., February 9, 1897.

W. J. BLACK,
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir: The first number of your magazine, “Birds,” is upon my desk. I am highly pleased with it. It will prove a very serviceable publication—one that strikes out along the right lines. For the purpose intended, it has, in my opinion, no equal. It is clear, concise, and admirably illustrated.

Very respectfully,
W. R. Jackson,
State Superintendent Public Instruction.

North Lima, Ohio, February 1, 1897.

Mr. W. E. Watt,

Dear Sir: Sample copy of “Birds” received. All of the family delighted with it. We wish it unbounded success. It will be an excellent supplement to “In Birdland” in the Ohio Teachers’ Reading Circle, and I venture Ohio will be to the front with a good subscription list. I enclose list of teachers.

Very truly,
C. M. L. Altdoerffer,
Township Superintendent.

Milwaukee, January 30, 1897.

Nature Study Publishing Company,
227 Dearborn Street, Chicago.

Gentlemen: I acknowledge with pleasure the receipt of your publication, “Birds,” with accompanying circulars. I consider it the best on the subject in existence. I have submitted the circulars and publication to my teachers, who have nothing to say but praise in behalf of the monthly.

Julius Torney,
Principal 2nd Dist. Primary School, Milwaukee, Wis.

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