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Vol. 2, No. 3, by Various**

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BIRDS

A MONTHLY SERIAL

ILLUSTRATED BY COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY

DESIGNED TO PROMOTE

KNOWLEDGE OF BIRD-LIFE

CHICAGO
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CHICAGO.

BIRDS.

ILLUSTRATED BY COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY.

VOL. II.

SEPTEMBER.

No. 3.

BIRD SONG.

How songs are made
Is a mystery,
Which studied for years
Still baffles me.

—R. H. STODDARD.



OME birds are poets and sing all summer," says Thoreau. "They are the true singers. Any man can write verses in the love season. We are most interested in those birds that sing for the love of music, and not of their mates; who meditate their strains and amuse themselves with singing; the birds whose strains are of deeper sentiment."

Thoreau does not mention by name any of the poet-birds to which he alludes, but we think our selections for the present month include some of them. The most beautiful specimen of all, which is as rich in color and "sun-sparkle" as the most polished gem to which he owes his name, the Ruby-throated Humming Bird, cannot sing at all, uttering only a shrill mouse-like squeak. The humming sound made by his wings is far more agreeable than his voice, for "when the mild gold stars flower out" it announces his presence. Then

"A dim shape quivers about
Some sweet rich heart of a rose."

He hovers over all the flowers that possess the peculiar sweetness that he loves—the blossoms of the honeysuckle, the red, the white, and the yellow roses, and the morning glory. The red clover is as sweet to him as to the honey bee, and a pair of them may often be seen hovering over the blossoms for a moment, and then disappearing with the quickness of a flash of light, soon to return to the same spot and repeat the performance. *Squeak, squeak!* is probably their call note.

Something of the poet is the Yellow Warbler, though his song is not quite as long as an epic. He repeats it a little too often, perhaps, but there is such a pervading cheerfulness about it that we will not quarrel with the author. *Sweet-sweet-sweet-*

sweet-sweet-sweeter-sweeter! is his frequent contribution to the volume of nature, and all the while he is darting about the trees, "carrying sun-glints on his back wherever he goes." His song is appropriate to every season, but it is in the spring, when we hear it first, that it is doubly welcome to the ear. The grateful heart asks with Bourdillon:

"What tidings hath the Warbler heard
That bids him leave the lands of summer
For woods and fields where April yields
Bleak welcome to the blithe newcomer?"

The Mourning Dove may be called the poet of melancholy, for its song is, to us, without one element of cheerfulness. Hopeless despair is in every note, and, as the bird undoubtedly does have cheerful moods, as indicated by its actions, its song must be appreciated only by its mate. *Coo-o, coo-o!* suddenly thrown upon the air and resounding near and far is something hardly to be extolled, we should think, and yet the beautiful and graceful Dove possesses so many pretty ways that every one is attracted to it, and the tender affection of the mated pair is so manifest, and their constancy so conspicuous, that the name has become a symbol of domestic concord.

The Cuckoo must utter his note in order to be recognized, for few that are learned in bird lore can discriminate him save from his notes. He proclaims himself by calling forth his own name, so that it is impossible to make a mistake about him. Well, his note is an agreeable one and has made him famous. As he loses his song in the summer months, he is inclined to make good use of it when he finds it again. English boys are so skillful in imitating the Cuckoo's song, which they do to an exasperating extent, that the bird himself may often wish for that of the Nightingale, which is inimitable.

But the Cuckoo's song, monotonous as it is, is decidedly to be preferred to that of the female House Wren, with its *Chit-chit-chit-chit*, when suspicious or in anger. The male, however, is a real poet, let us say—and sings a merry roulade, sudden, abruptly ended, and frequently repeated. He sings, apparently, for the love of music, and is as merry and gay when his mate is absent as when she is at his side, proving that his singing is not solely for her benefit.

So good an authority as Dr. Coues vouches for the exquisite vocalization of the Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Have you ever heard a wire vibrating? Such is the call note of the Ruby, thin and metallic. But his song has a fullness, a variety, and a melody, which, being often heard in the spring migration, make this feathered beauty additionally attractive. Many of the fine songsters are not brilliantly attired, but this fellow has a combination of attractions to commend him as worthy of the bird student's careful attention.

Of the Hermit Thrush, whose song is celebrated, we will say only, "Read everything you can find about him." He will not be discovered easily, for even Olive Thorne Miller, who is presumed to know all about birds, tells of her pursuit of the Hermit in northern New York, where it was said to be abundant, and finding, when she looked for him, that he had always "been there" and was gone. But one day in August she saw the bird and heard the song and exclaimed: "This only was lacking—this crowns my summer."

The Song Sparrow can sing too, and the Phoebe, beloved of man, and the White-breasted Nuthatch, a little. They do not require the long-seeking of the Hermit Thrush, whose very name implies that he prefers to flock by himself, but can be seen in our parks throughout the season. But the Sparrow loves the companionship of man, and has often been a solace to him. It is stated by the biographer of Kant, the great metaphysician, that at the age of eighty he had become indifferent to much that was passing around him in which he had formerly taken great interest. The flowers showed their beautiful hues to him in vain; his weary vision gave little heed to their loveliness; their perfume came unheeded to the sense which before had inhaled it with eagerness. The coming on of spring, which he had been accustomed to hail with delight, now gave him no joy save that it brought back a little Sparrow, which came annually and made its home in a tree that stood by his window. Year after year, as one generation went the way of all the earth, another would return to its birth-place to reward the tender care of their benefactor by singing to him their pleasant songs. And he longed for their return in the spring with "an eagerness and intensity of expectation."

How many provisions nature has for keeping us simple-hearted and child-like! The Song Sparrow is one of them.

—C. C. MARBLE.



SUMMER YELLOW-BIRD.

From col. F. M. Woodruff.

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THE YELLOW WARBLER.

IN a recent article Angus Gaines describes so delightfully some of the characteristics of the Yellow Warbler, or Summer Yellow-bird, sometimes called the Wild Canary, that we are tempted to make use of part of it. "Back and forth across the garden the little yellow birds were flitting, dodging through currant and gooseberry bushes, hiding in the lilacs, swaying for an instant on swinging sprays of grape vines, and then flashing out across the garden beds like yellow sunbeams. They were lithe, slender, dainty little creatures, and were so quick in their movements that I could not recognize them at first, but when one of them hopped down before me, lifted a fallen leaf and dragged a cutworm from beneath it, and, turning his head, gave me a sidewise glance with his victim still struggling in his beak, I knew him. His gay coat was yellow without the black cap, wings, and tail which show in such marked contrast to the bright canary hue of that other yellow bird, the Gold-finch.

"Small and delicate as these birds are, they had been on a long journey to the southward to spend the winter, and now on the first of May, they had returned to their old home to find the land at its fairest—all blossoms, buds, balmy air, sunshine, and melody. As they flitted about in their restless way, they sang the soft, low, warbling trills, which gave them their name of Yellow Warbler."

Mrs. Wright says these beautiful birds come like whirling leaves, half autumn yellow, half green of spring, the colors blending as in the outer petals of grass-grown daffodils. "Lovable, cheerful little spirits, darting about the trees, exclaiming at each morsel that they glean. Carrying sun glints on their backs wherever they go, they should make the gloomiest misanthrope feel the season's charm. They are so sociable and confiding, feeling as much at home in the trees by the house as in seclusion."

The Yellow-bird builds in bushes, and the nest is a wonderful example of bird architecture. Milkweed, lint and its strips of fine bark are glued to twigs, and form the exterior of the nest. Its inner lining is made of the silky down on dandelion-balls woven together with horse-hair. In this dainty nest are laid four or five creamy white eggs, speckled with lilac tints and red-browns. The unwelcome egg of the Cow-bird is often found in the Yellow-bird's nest, but this Warbler builds a floor over the egg, repeating the expedient, if the Cow-bird continues her mischief, until sometimes a third story is erected.

A pair of Summer Yellow-birds, we are told, had built their nest in a wild rose bush, and were rearing their family in a wilderness of fragrant blossoms whose tinted petals dropped upon the dainty nest, or settled upon the back of the brooding mother. The birds, however, did not stay "to have their pictures taken," but their nest may be seen among the roses.

The Yellow Warbler's song is *Sweet-sweet-sweet-sweet-sweet-sweeter-sweeter*: seven times repeated.

THE HERMIT THRUSH.

IN John Burroughs' "Birds and Poets" this master singer is described as the most melodious of our songsters, with the exception of the Wood Thrush, a bird whose strains, more than any other's, express harmony and serenity, and he complains that no merited poetic monument has yet been reared to it. But there can be no good reason for complaining of the absence of appreciative prose concerning the Hermit. One writer says: "How pleasantly his notes greet the ear amid the shrieking of the wind and the driving snow, or when in a calm and lucid interval of genial weather we hear him sing, if possible, more richly than before. His song reminds us of a coming season when the now dreary landscape will be clothed in a blooming garb befitting the vernal year—of the song of the Blackbird and Lark, and hosts of other tuneful throats which usher in that lovely season. Should you disturb him when singing he usually drops down and awaits your departure, though sometimes he merely retires to a neighboring tree and warbles as sweetly as before."

In "Birdcraft" Mrs. Wright tells us, better than any one else, the story of the Hermit. She says: "This spring, the first week in May, when standing at the window about six o'clock in the morning, I heard an unusual note, and listened, thinking it at first a Wood Thrush and then a Thrasher, but soon finding that it was neither of these I opened the window softly and looked among the near by shrubs, with my glass. The wonderful melody ascended gradually in the scale as it progressed, now trilling, now legato, the most perfect, exalted, unrestrained, yet withal, finished bird song that I ever heard. At the first note I caught sight of the singer perching among the lower sprays of a dogwood tree. I could see him perfectly: it was the Hermit Thrush. In a moment he began again. I have never heard the Nightingale, but those who have say that it is the surroundings and its continuous night singing that make it even the equal of our Hermit; for, while the Nightingales sing in numbers in the moonlit groves, the Hermit tunes his lute sometimes in inaccessible solitudes, and there is something immaterial and immortal about the song."

The Hermit Thrush is comparatively common in the northeast, and in Pennsylvania it is, with the exception of the Robin, the commonest of the Thrushes. In the eastern, as in many of the middle states, it is only a migrant. It is usually regarded as a shy bird. It is a species of more general distribution than any of the small Thrushes, being found entirely across the continent and north to the Arctic regions. It is not quite the same bird, however, in all parts of its range, the Rocky Mountain region being occupied by a larger, grayer race, while on the Pacific coast a dwarf race takes its place. It is known in parts of New England as the "Ground Swamp Robin," and in other localities as "Swamp Angel."

True lovers of nature find a certain spiritual satisfaction in the song of this bird. "In the evening twilight of a June day," says one of these, "when all nature seemed resting in quiet, the liquid, melting, lingering notes of the solitary bird would steal out upon the air and move us strangely. What was the feeling it awoke in our hearts? Was it sorrow or joy, fear or hope, memory or expectation? And while we listened, we thought the meaning of it all was coming; it was trembling on the air, and in an instant it would reach us. Then it faded, it was gone, and we could not even remember what it had been."



HERMIT THRUSH.

From col. F. M. Woodruff.

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THE HERMIT THRUSH.

I am sorry, children, that I cannot give you a specimen of my song as an introduction to the short story of my life. One writer about my family says it is like this: "O spheral, spheral! O holy, holy! O clear away, clear away! O clear up, clear up!" as if I were talking to the weather. May be my notes do sound something like that, but I prefer you should hear me sing when I am alone in the woods, and other birds are silent. It is ever being said of me that I am as fine a singer as the English Nightingale. I wish I could hear this rival of mine, and while I have no doubt his voice is a sweet one, and I am not too vain of my own, I should like to "compare notes" with him. Why do not some of you children ask your parents to invite a few pairs of Nightingales to come and settle here? They would like our climate, and would, I am sure, be welcomed by all the birds with a warmth not accorded the English Sparrow, who has taken possession and, in spite of my love for secret hiding places, will not let even me alone.

When you are older, children, you can read all about me in another part of BIRDS. I will merely tell you here that I live with you only from May to October, coming and going away in company with the other Thrushes, though I keep pretty well to myself while here, and while building my nest and bringing up my little ones I hide myself from the face of man, although I do not fear his presence. That is why I am called the Hermit.

If you wish to know in what way I am unlike my cousin Thrushes in appearance, turn to pages 84 and 182, Vol. 1, of BIRDS. There you will see their pictures. I am one of the smallest of the family, too. Some call me "the brown bird with the rusty tail," and other names have been fitted to me, as Ground Gleaner, Tree Trapper, and Seed Sower. But I do not like nicknames, and am just plain,

HERMIT THRUSH.

THE SONG SPARROW.

Glimmers gay the leafless thicket

Close beside my garden gate,
Where, so light, from post to wicket,
Hops the Sparrow, blithe, sedate;
Who, with meekly folded wing,
Comes to sun himself and sing.

It was there, perhaps, last year,
That his little house he built;
For he seemed to perk and peer
And to twitter, too, and tilt
The bare branches in between,
With a fond, familiar mien.

—GEORGE PARSONS LATHROP.



Do not think it at all amiss to say that this darling among song birds can be heard singing nearly everywhere the whole year round, although he is supposed to come in March and leave us in November. We have heard him in February, when his little feet made tracks in the newly fallen snow, singing as cheerily as in April, May, and June, when he is supposed to be in ecstasy. Even in August, when the heat of the dog-days and his moulting time drive him to leafy seclusion, his liquid notes may be listened for with certainty, while "all through October they sound clearly above the rustling leaves, and some morning he comes to the dogwood by the arbor and announces the first frost in a song that is more direct than that in which he told of spring. While the chestnuts fall from their velvet nests, he is singing in the hedge; but when the brush heaps burn away to fragrant smoke in November, they veil his song a little, but it still continues."

While the Song Sparrow nests in the extreme northern part of Illinois, it is known in the more southern portions only as a winter resident. This is somewhat remarkable, it is thought, since along the Atlantic coast it is one of the most abundant summer residents throughout Maryland and Virginia, in the same latitudes as southern Illinois, where it is a winter sojourner, abundant, but very retiring, inhabiting almost solely the bushy swamps in the bottom lands, and unknown as a song bird. This is regarded as a remarkable instance of variation in habits with locality, since in the Atlantic states it breeds abundantly, and is besides one of the most familiar of the native birds.

The location of the Song Sparrow's nest is variable; sometimes on the ground, or in a low bush, but usually in as secluded a place as its instinct of preservation enables it to find. A favorite spot is a deep shaded ravine through which a rivulet ripples, where the solitude is disturbed only by the notes of his song, made more sweet and clear by the prevailing silence.



SONG SPARROW.

From col. F. M. Woodruff.

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THE SONG SPARROW.

DEAR YOUNG READERS:

I fancy many of the little folks who are readers of BIRDS are among my acquaintances. Though I have never spoken to you, I have seen your eyes brighten when my limpid little song has been borne to you by a passing breeze which made known my presence. Once I saw a pale, worn face turn to look at me from a window, a smile of pleasure lighting it up. And I too was pleased to think that I had given some one a moment's happiness. I have seen bird lovers (for we have lovers, and many of them) pause on the highway and listen to my pretty notes, which I know as well as any one have a cheerful and patient sound, and which all the world likes, for to be cheered and encouraged along the pathway of life is like a pleasant medicine to my weary and discouraged fellow citizens. For you must know I am a citizen, as my friend Dr. Coues calls me, and all my relatives. He and Mrs. Mabel Osgood Wright have written a book about us called "Citizen Bird," and in it they have supported us in all our rights, which even you children are beginning to admit we have. You are kinder to us than you used to be. Some of you come quickly to our rescue from untaught and thoughtless boys who, we think, if they were made to know how sensitive we are to suffering and wrong, would turn to be our friends and protectors instead. One dear boy I remember well (and he is considered a hero by the Song Sparrows) saved a nest of our birdies from a cruel school boy robber. Why should not all strong boys become our champions? Many of them have great, honest, sympathetic hearts in their bosoms, and, if we can only enlist them in our favor, they can give us a peace and protection which for years we have been sighing. Yes, sighing, because our hearts, though little, are none the less susceptible to all the asperities—the terrible asperities of human nature. Papa will tell you what I mean: you would not understand bird language.

Did you ever see my nest? I build it near the ground, and sometimes, when kind friends prepare a little box for me, I occupy it. My song is quite varied, but you will always recognize me by my call note, *Chek! Chek! Chek!* Some people say they hear me repeat "Maids, maids, maids, hang on your teakettle," but I think this is only fancy, for I can sing a real song, admired, I am sure, by all who love

SONG SPARROW.

THE CUCKOO.



YOUR first introduction to the Cuckoo was by means of the apparition which issued hourly from a little German clock, such as are frequently found in country inns. This particular clock had but one dial hand, and the exact time of day could not be determined by it until the appearance of the Cuckoo, who, in a squeaking voice, seemed to announce that it was just one hour later or earlier, as the case might be, than at his last appearance. We were puzzled, and remember fancying that a sun dial, in clear weather, would be far more satisfactory as a time piece. "Coo-coo," the image repeated, and then retired until the hour hand should summon him once more.

To very few people, not students of birds, is the Cuckoo really known. Its evanescent voice is often recognized, but being a solitary wanderer even ornithologists have yet to learn much of its life history. In their habits the American and European Cuckoos are so similar that whatever of poetry and sentiment has been written of them is applicable alike to either. A delightful account of the species may be found in Dixon's *Bird Life*, a book of refreshing and original observation.

"The Cuckoo is found in the verdant woods, in the coppice, and even on the lonely moors. He flits from one stunted tree to another and utters his notes in company with the wild song of the Ring Ousel and the harsh calls of the Grouse and Plover. Though his notes are monotonous, still no one gives them this appellation. No! this little wanderer is held too dear by us all as the harbinger of spring for aught but praise to be bestowed on his mellow notes, which, though full and soft, are powerful, and may on a calm morning, before the everyday hum of human toil begins, be heard a mile away, over wood, field, and lake. Toward the summer solstice his notes are on the wane, and when he gives them forth we often hear him utter them as if laboring under great difficulty, and resembling the syllables, "*Coo-coo-coo-coo*"."

On one occasion Dixon says he heard a Cuckoo calling in treble notes, *Cuck oo-oo, cuck-oo-oo*, inexpressibly soft and beautiful, notably the latter one. He at first supposed an echo was the cause of these strange notes, the bird being then half a mile away, but he satisfied himself that this was not the case, as the bird came and alighted on a noble oak a few yards from him and repeated the notes. The Cuckoo utters his notes as he flies, but only, as a rule, when a few yards from the place on

which he intends alighting.

The opinion is held by some observers that Nature has not intended the Cuckoo to build a nest, but influences it to lay its eggs in the nests of other birds, and intrust its young to the care of those species best adapted to bring them to maturity. But the American species does build a nest, and rears its young, though Audubon gives it a bad character, saying: "It robs smaller birds of their eggs." It does not deserve the censure it has received, however, and it is useful in many ways. Its hatred of the worm is intense, destroying many more than it can eat. So thoroughly does it do its work, that orchards, which three years ago, were almost leafless, the trunks even being covered by slippery webbing, are again yielding a good crop.

In September and October the Cuckoo is silent and suddenly disappears. "He seldom sees the lovely tints of autumn, and never hears the wintry storm-winds' voice, for, impelled by a resistless impulse, he wings his way afar over mountain, stream, and sea, to a land where northern blasts are not felt, and where a summer sun is shining in a cloudless sky."



YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO.

From col. O. E. Pagin.

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THE RUBY-THROATED HUMMING BIRD.

Is it a gem, half bird,
Or is it a bird, half gem?
—EDGAR FAWCETT.



F all animated beings this is the most elegant in form and the most brilliant in colors, says the great naturalist Buffon. The stones and metals polished by our arts are not comparable to this jewel of Nature. She has it least in size of the order of birds, *maxime miranda in minimis*. Her masterpiece is the Humming bird, and upon it she has heaped all the gifts which the other birds may only share. Lightness, rapidity, nimbleness, grace, and rich apparel all belong to this little favorite. The emerald, the ruby, and the topaz gleam upon its dress. It never soils them with the dust of earth, and its aerial life scarcely touches the turf an instant. Always in the air, flying from flower to flower, it has their freshness as well as their brightness. It lives upon their nectar, and dwells only in the climates where they perennially bloom.

All kinds of Humming birds are found in the hottest countries of the New World. They are quite numerous and seem to be confined between the two tropics, for those which penetrate the temperate zones in summer stay there only a short time. They seem to follow the sun in its advance and retreat; and to fly on the zephyr wing after an eternal spring.

The smaller species of the Humming birds are less in size than the great fly wasp, and more slender than the drone. Their beak is a fine needle and their tongue a slender thread. Their little black eyes are like two shining points, and the feathers of

their wings so delicate that they seem transparent. Their short feet, which they use very little, are so tiny one can scarcely see them. They rarely alight during the day. They have a swift continual humming flight. The movement of their wings is so rapid that when pausing in the air, the bird seems quite motionless. One sees him stop before a blossom, then dart like a flash to another, visiting all, plunging his tongue into their hearts, flattening them with his wings, never settling anywhere, but neglecting none. He hastens his inconstancies only to pursue his loves more eagerly and to multiply his innocent joys. For this light lover of flowers lives at their expense without ever blighting them. He only pumps their honey, and for this alone his tongue seems designed.

The vivacity of these small birds is only equaled by their courage, or rather their audacity. Sometimes they may be seen furiously chasing birds twenty times their size, fastening upon their bodies, letting themselves be carried along in their flight, while they peck fiercely until their tiny rage is satisfied. Sometimes they fight each other vigorously. Impatience seems their very essence. If they approach a blossom and find it faded, they mark their spite by a hasty rending of the petals. Their only voice is a weak cry of *Screp, screp*, frequent and repeated, which they utter in the woods from dawn until at the first rays of the sun they all take flight and scatter over the country.

The Ruby-throat is the only native Humming bird of eastern North America, where it is a common summer resident from May to October, breeding from Florida to Labrador. The nest is a circle an inch and a half in diameter, made of fern wood, plant down, and so forth, shingled with lichens to match the color of the branch on which it rests. Its only note is a shrill, mouse-like squeak.

THE HOUSE WREN.

All the children, it seems to me, are familiar with the habits of Johnny and Jenny Wren; and many of them, especially such as have had some experience with country life, could themselves tell a story of these mites of birds. Mr. F. Saunders tells one: "Perhaps you may think the Wren is so small a bird he cannot sing much of a song, but he can. The way we first began to notice him was by seeing our pet cat jumping about the yard, dodging first one way and then another, then darting up a tree; looking surprised, and disappointingly jumping down again.

"Pussy had found a new play-mate, for the little Wren evidently thought it great fun to fly down just in front of her and dart away before she could reach him, leading her from one spot to another, hovering above her head, chattering to her all the time, and at last flying up far out of her reach. This he repeated day after day, for some time, seeming to enjoy the fun of disappointing her so nicely and easily. But after a while the little fellow thought he would like a play-mate nearer his own size, and went off to find one. But he came back all alone, and perched himself on the very tip-top of a lightning-rod on a high barn at the back of the yard; and there he would sing his sweet little trilling song, hour after hour, hardly stopping long enough to find food for his meals. We wondered that he did not grow tired of it. For about a week we watched him closely, and one day I came running into the house to tell the rest of the family with surprise and delight that our little Wren knew what he was about, for with his winning song he had called a mate to him. He led her to the tree where he had played with pussy, and they began building a nest; but pussy watched them as well as we, and meant to have her revenge upon him yet, so she sprang into the tree, tore the nest to pieces, and tried to catch Jenny. The birds rebuilt their nest three times, and finally we came to their rescue and placed a box in a safe place under the eaves of the house, and Mr. Wren with his keen, shrewd eyes, soon saw and appropriated it. There they stayed and raised a pretty family of birdies; and I hope he taught them, as he did me, a lesson in perseverance I'll never forget."



RUBY-THROATED HUMMING BIRDS.

From col. F. M. Woodruff.

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HOUSE WREN.

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THE RUBY-THROATED HUMMING BIRD.

DEAR YOUNG FOLKS:

I fancy you think I cannot stop long enough to tell you a story, even about myself. It is true, I am always busy with the flowers, drinking their honey with my long bill, as you must be busy with your books, if you would learn what they teach. I always select for my food the sweetest flowers that grow in the garden.

Do you think you would be vain if you had my beautiful colors to wear? Of course, you would not, but so many of my brothers and sisters have been destroyed to adorn the bonnets and headdresses of the thoughtless that the children cannot be too early taught to love us too well to do us harm. Have you ever seen a ruby? It is one of the most valued of gems. It is the color of my throat, and from its rare and brilliant beauty I get a part of my name. The ruby is worn by great ladies and, with the emerald and topaz, whose bright colors I also wear, is much esteemed as an ornament.

If you will come into the garden in the late afternoon, between six and seven o'clock, when I am taking my supper, and when the sun is beginning to close his great eye, you will see his rays shoot sidewise and show all the splendor of my plumage. You will see me, too, if your eyes are sharp enough, draw up my tiny claws, pause in front of a rose, and remain seemingly motionless. But listen, and you will hear the reason for my name—a tense humming sound. Some call me a Hummer indeed.

I spend only half the year in the garden, coming in May and saying farewell in October. After my mate and I are gone you may find our nest. But your eyes will be sharp indeed if they detect it when the leaves are on the trees, it is so small and blends with the branches. We use fern-wool and soft down to build it, and shingle it with lichens to match the branch it nests upon. You should see the tiny eggs of pure white. But we, our nest and our eggs, are so dainty and delicate that they should never be touched. We are only to be looked at and admired.

Farewell. Look for me when you go a-Maying.

RUBY.

THE HOUSE WREN.

“It was a merry time
When Jenny Wren was young,
When prettily she looked,
And sweetly, too, she sung.”

IN looking over an old memorandum book the other day,” says Col. S. T. Walker, of Florida, “I came across the following notes concerning the nesting of the House Wren. I was sick at the time, and watched the whole proceeding, from the laying of the first stick to the conclusion. The nest was placed in one of the pigeonholes of my desk, and the birds effected an entrance to the room through sundry cracks in the log cabin.”

Nest begun	April 15th.
Nest completed and first egg laid	April 27th.
Last egg laid	May 3rd.
Began sitting	May 4th.
Hatching completed	May 18th.
Young began to fly	May 27th.
Young left the nest	June 1st.
Total time occupied	47 days.

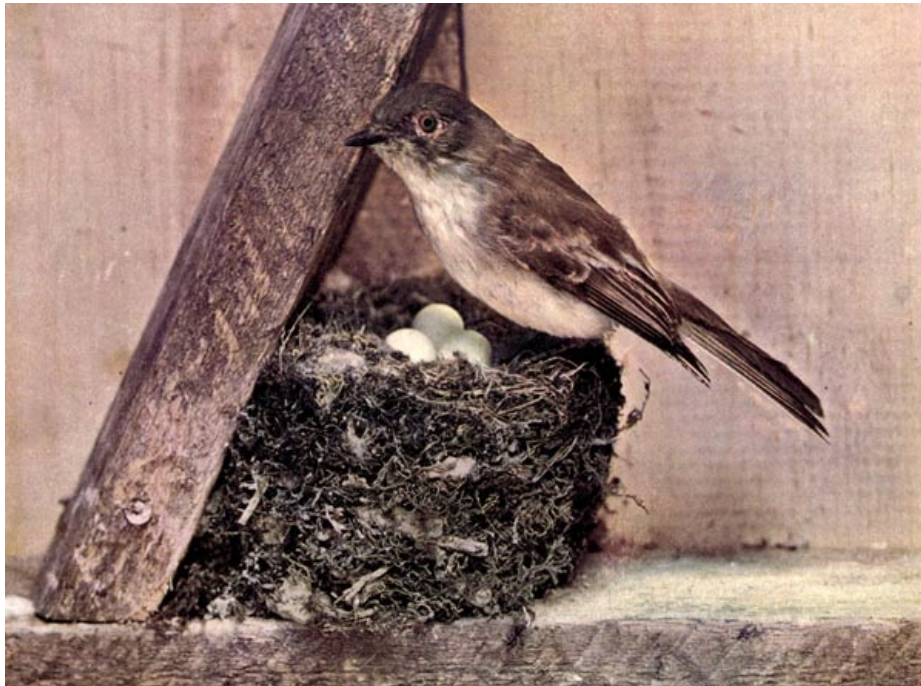
Such is the usual time required for bringing forth a brood of this species of Wren, which is the best known of the family. In the Atlantic states it is more numerous than in the far west, where wooded localities are its chosen haunts, and where it is equally at home in the cottonwoods of the river valleys, and on the aspens just below the timber line on lofty mountains.

Mrs. Osgood Wright says very quaintly that the House Wren is a bird who has allowed the word *male* to be obliterated from its *social* constitution at least: that we

always speak of Jenny Wren: always refer to the Wren as *she* as we do of a ship. That it is Johnny Wren who sings and disports himself generally, but it is Jenny, who, by dint of much scolding and fussing, keeps herself well to the front. She chooses the building-site and settles all the little domestic details. If Johnny does not like her choice, he may go away and stay away; she will remain where she has taken up her abode and make a second matrimonial venture.

The House Wren's song is a merry one, sudden, abruptly ended, and frequently repeated. It is heard from the middle of April to October, and upon the bird's arrival it at once sets about preparing its nest, a loose heap of sticks with a soft lining, in holes, boxes, and the like. From six to ten tiny, cream-colored eggs are laid, so thickly spotted with brown that the whole egg is tinged.

The House Wren is not only one of our most interesting and familiar neighbors, but it is useful as an exterminator of insects, upon which it feeds. Frequently it seizes small butterflies when on the wing. We have in mind a sick child whose convalescence was hastened and cheered by the near-by presence of the merry House Wren, which sings its sweet little trilling song, hour after hour, hardly stopping long enough to find food for its meals.



PHOEBE.

From col. J. G. Parker, Jr.

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THE PHOEBE.

Oft the Phoebe's cheery notes
Wake the laboring swain;
"Come, come!" say the merry throats,
"Morn is here again."
Phoebe, Phoebe! let them sing for aye,
Calling him to labor at the break of day.

—C. C. M.

R

EARLY everywhere in the United States we find this cheerful bird, known as Pewee, Barn Pewee, Bridge Pewee, or Phoebe, or Pewit Flycatcher. "It is one of that charming coterie of the feathered tribe who cheer the abode of man with their presence." There are few farmyards without a pair of Pewees, who do the farmer much service by lessening the number of flies about the barn, and by calling him to his work in the morning by their cheery notes.

Dr. Brewer says that this species is attracted both to the vicinity of water and to the neighborhood of dwellings, probably for the same reason—the abundance of insects in either situation. They are a familiar, confiding, and gentle bird, attached to localities, and returning to them year after year. Their nests are found in sheltered situations, as under a bridge, a projecting rock, in the porches of houses, etc. They have been known to build on a small shelf in the porch of a dwelling, against the wall

of a railroad station, within reach of the passengers, and under a projecting window-sill, in full view of the family, entirely unmoved by the presence of the latter at meal time.

Like all the flycatcher family the Phoebe takes its food mostly flying. Mrs. Wright says that the Pewee in his primitive state haunts dim woods and running water, and that when domesticated he is a great bather, and may be seen in the half-light dashing in and out of the water as he makes trips to and from the nest. After the young are hatched both old and young disport themselves about the water until moulting time. She advises: "Do not let the Phoebes build under the hoods of your windows, for their spongy nests harbor innumerable bird-lice, and under such circumstances your fly-screens will become infested and the house invaded."

In its native woods the nest is of moss, mud, and grass placed on a rock, near and over running water; but in the vicinity of settlements and villages it is built on a horizontal bridge beam, or on timber supporting a porch or shed. The eggs are pure white, somewhat spotted. The notes, to some ears, are *Phoebe*, *phoebe*, *pewit*, *phoebe!* to others, of somewhat duller sense of hearing, perhaps, *Pewee*, *pewee*, *pewee!* We confess to a fancy that the latter is the better imitation.

THE RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET.

BASKETT says that the Kinglets come at a certain early spring date before the leaves are fully expanded, and flutter upward, while they take something from beneath the budding leaf or twig. It is a peculiar motion, which with their restless ways, olive-green color, and small size, readily distinguishes them. It is rare that one is still. "But the ruby-crowned sometimes favors me with a song, and as it is a little long, he usually is quiet till done. It is one of the sweetest little lullaby-like strains. One day I saw him in the rose bush just near voluntarily expand the plumage of his crown and show the brilliant golden-ruby feathers beneath. Usually they are mostly concealed. It was a rare treat, and visible to me only because of my rather exalted view. He generally reserves this display for his mate, but he was here among some Snow-birds and Tree Sparrows, and seemed to be trying to make these plain folks envious of the pretty feathers in his hat."

These wonderfully dainty little birds are of great value to the farmer and the fruit grower, doing good work among all classes of fruit trees by killing grubs and larvae. In spite of their value in this respect, they have been, in common with many other attractive birds, recklessly killed for millinery purposes.

It is curious to see these busy wanderers, who are always cheery and sociable, come prying and peering about the fruit trees, examining every little nook of possible concealment with the greatest interest. They do not stay long after November, and return again in April.

The nest of this Kinglet is rarely seen. It is of matted hair, feathers, moss, etc., bulky, round, and partly hanging. Until recently the eggs were unknown. They are of a dirty cream-white, deepening at larger end to form a ring, some specimens being spotted.

Mr. Nehrling, who has heard this Kinglet sing in central Wisconsin and northern Illinois, speaks of the "power, purity, and volume of the notes, their faultless modulation and long continuance," and Dr. Elliott Coues says of it: "The Kinglet's exquisite vocalization defies description." Dr. Brewer says that its song is clear, resonant, and high, a prolonged series, varying from the lowest tones to the highest, and terminating with the latter. It may be heard at quite a distance, and in some respects bears more resemblance to the song of the English Sky-lark than to that of the Canary, to which Mr. Audubon compares it.



RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET.

From col. F. M. Woodruff.

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THE MOURNING DOVE.

DEAR YOUNG BIRD LOVERS:

Most every person thinks that, while my actions are very pretty and attractive, and speak much in my favor, I can only really say, *Coo-o, Coo-o*, which they also think does not mean anything at all. Well, I just thought I would undeceive them by writing you a letter. Many grown up people fancy that we birds cannot express ourselves because we don't know very much. Of course, there is a good reason why they have this poor opinion of us. They are so busy with their own private concerns that they forget that there are little creatures like ourselves in the world who, if they would take a little time to become acquainted with them, would fill their few hours of leisure with a sweeter recreation than they find in many of their chosen outings. A great English poet, whose writings you will read when you get older, said you should look through Nature up to Nature's God. What did he mean? I think he had us birds in his mind, for it is through a study of our habits, more perhaps than that of the voiceless trees or the dumb four-footed creatures that roam the fields, that your hearts are opened to see and admire real beauty. We birds are the true teachers of faith, hope, and charity,—faith, because we trust one another; hope, because, even when our mother Nature seems unkind, sending the drifting snow and the bitter blasts of winter, we sing a song of summer time; and charity, because we are never fault finders.

I believe, without knowing it, I have been telling you about myself and my mate. We Doves are very sincere, and every one says we are constant.

If you live in the country, children, you must often hear our voices. We are so tender and fond of each other that we are looked upon as models for children, and even grown-up folks. My mate does not build a very nice nest—only uses a few sticks to keep the eggs from falling out—but she is a good mother and nurses the little ones very tenderly. Some people are so kind that they build for us a dove cote, supply us with wheat and corn, and make our lives as free from care and danger as they can. Come and see us some day, and then you can tell whether my picture is a good one. The artist thinks it is and he certainly took lots of pains with it.

Now, if you will be kind to all birds, you will find me, in name only,

MOURNING DOVE.



MOURNING DOVE.

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HOW THE BIRDS SECURED THEIR RIGHTS.

Deuteronomy xxxii 6-7.—“If a bird’s nest chance to be before thee in the way, in any tree, or on the ground, young ones or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young. But thou shalt in anywise let the dam go, that it may be well with thee, and that thou may prolong thy days.”

IT is said that the following petition was instrumental in securing the adoption in Massachusetts of a law prohibiting the wearing of song and insectivorous birds on women’s hats. It is stated that the interesting document was prepared by United States Senator Hoar. The foregoing verse of Scripture might have been quoted by the petitioning birds to strengthen their position before the lawmakers:

“TO THE GREAT AND GENERAL COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS: We, the song birds of Massachusetts and their playfellows, make this our humble petition. We know more about you than you think we do. We know how good you are. We have hopped about the roofs and looked in at the windows of the houses you have built for poor and sick and hungry people, and little lame and deaf and blind children. We have built our nests in the trees and sung many a song as we flew about the gardens and parks you have made so beautiful for your children, especially your poor children, to play in. Every year we fly a great way over the country, keeping all the time where the sun is bright and warm. And we know that whenever you do anything the other people all over this great land between the seas and the great lakes find it out, and pretty soon will try to do the same. We know. We know.

“We are Americans just the same as you are. Some of us, like some of you, came across the great sea. But most of the birds like us have lived here a long while; and the birds like us welcomed your fathers when they came here many, many years ago. Our fathers and mothers have always done their best to please your fathers and mothers.

“Now we have a sad story to tell you. Thoughtless or bad people are trying to destroy us. They kill us because our feathers are beautiful. Even pretty and sweet girls, who we should think would be our best friends, kill our brothers and children so that they may wear our plumage on their hats. Sometimes people kill us for mere wantonness. Cruel boys destroy our nests and steal our eggs and our young ones. People with guns and snares lie in wait to kill us; as if the place for a bird were not in the sky, alive, but in a shop window or in a glass case. If this goes on much longer all our song birds will be gone. Already we are told in some other countries that used to be full of birds they are now almost gone. Even the Nightingales are being killed in Italy.

“Now we humbly pray that you will stop all this and will save us from this sad fate. You have already made a law that no one shall kill a harmless song bird or destroy our nests or our eggs. Will you please make another one that no one shall wear our feathers, so that no one shall kill us to get them? We want them all ourselves. Your pretty girls are pretty enough without them. We are told that it is as easy for you to do it as for a blackbird to whistle.

“If you will, we know how to pay you a hundred times over. We will teach your children to keep themselves clean and neat. We will show them how to live together in peace and love and to agree as we do in our nests. We will build pretty houses which you will like to see. We will play about your garden and flowerbeds—ourselves like flowers on wings—without any cost to you. We will destroy the wicked insects and worms that spoil your cherries and currants and plums and apples and roses. We will give you our best songs, and make the spring more beautiful and the summer sweeter to you. Every June morning when you go out into the field, Oriole and Bluebird and Blackbird and Bobolink will fly after you, and make the day more delightful to you. And when you go home tired after sundown Vesper Sparrow will tell you how grateful we are. When you sit down on your porch after dark, Fifebird and Hermit Thrush and Wood Thrush will sing to you; and even Whip-poor-will will cheer you up a little. We know where we are safe. In a little while all the birds will come to live in Massachusetts again, and everybody who loves music will like to make a summer home with you.”

The singers are:

Brown Thrasher,	King Bird,
Robert o’Lincoln,	Swallow,
Vesper Sparrow,	Cedar Bird,
Hermit Thrush,	Cow-bird,
Robin Redbreast,	Martin,
Song Sparrow,	Veery,
Scarlet Tanager,	Vireo,
Summer Redbird,	Oriole,
Blue Heron,	Blackbird,
Humming Bird,	Fifebird,
Yellow-bird,	Wren,
Whip-poor-will,	Linnet,
Water Wagtail,	Pewee,
Woodpecker,	Phoebe,
Pigeon Woodpecker,	Yoke Bird,
Indigo Bird,	Lark,
Yellow Throat,	Sandpiper,
Wilson’s Thrush,	Chewink.
Chickadee,	

THE CAPTIVE’S ESCAPE.

I saw such a sorrowful sight, my dears,
Such a sad and sorrowful sight,
As I lingered under the swaying vines,
In the silvery morning light.
The skies were so blue and the day was so fair
With beautiful things untold,
You would think no sad and sorrowful thing
Could enter its heart of gold.

A fairy-like cage was hanging there,
So gay with turret and dome.
You’d be sure a birdie would gladly make
Such a beautiful place its home.
But a wee little yellow-bird sadly chirped
As it fluttered to and fro;
I know it was longing with all its heart
To its wild-wood home to go.

I heard a whirl of swift-rushing wings,
And an answering gladsome note;
As close to its nestlings’ prison bars,
I saw the poor mother bird float.
I saw her flutter and strive in vain
To open the prison door.

Then sadly cling with drooping wing
As if all her hopes were o'er.

But ere I could reach the prison house
And let its sweet captive free,
She was gone like a yellow flash of light,
To her home in a distant tree.
"Poor birdie," I thought, "you shall surely go,
When mamma comes back again;"
For it hurt me so that so small a thing
Should suffer so much of pain.

And back in a moment she came again
And close to her darling's side
With a bitter-sweet drop of honey dew,
Which she dropped in its mouth so wide.
Then away, with a strange wild mournful note
Of sorrow, which seemed to say
"Goodbye, my darling, my birdie dear,
Goodbye for many a day."

A quick wild flutter of tiny wings,
A faint low chirp of pain,
A throb of the little aching heart
And birdie was free again.
Oh sorrowful anguished mother-heart,
'Twas all that she could do,
She had set it free from a captive's life
In the only way she knew.

Poor little birdie! it never will fly
On tiny and tireless wing.
Through the pearly blue of the summer sky,
Or sing the sweet songs of spring.
And I think, little dears, if you had seen
The same sad sorrowful sight,
You never would cage a free wild bird
To suffer a captive's plight.

—MARY MORRISON.



WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH.

From col. F. M. Woodruff.

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THE WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH.

R

EARLY every one readily recognizes this species as it runs up and down and around the branches and trunks of trees in search of insect food, now and then uttering its curious *Quauk, quauk, quauk*. The White-breasted Nuthatch is often improperly called "Sapsucker," a name commonly applied to the Downy Woodpecker and others. It is a common breeding bird and usually begins nesting early in April, and two broods are frequently reared in a season. For its nesting place it usually selects the decayed trunk of a tree or stub, ranging all the way from two to sixty feet above the ground. The entrance may be a knot hole, a small opening, or a small round hole with a larger cavity at the end of it. Often the old excavation of the Downy Woodpecker is made use of. Chicken feathers, hair, and a few dry leaves loosely thrown together compose the nest.

This Nuthatch is abundant throughout the State of Illinois, and is a permanent resident everywhere except perhaps of the extreme northern counties. It seems to migrate in spring and return in autumn, but, in reality, as is well known, only retreats to the woodlands to breed, emerging again when the food supply grows scant in the autumn.

The Nuthatches associate familiarly with the Kinglets and Titmice, and often travel with them. Though regarded as shy birds they are not really so. Their habits of restlessness render them difficult of examination. "Tree-mice" is the local name given them by the farmers, and would be very appropriate could they sometimes remain as motionless as that diminutive animal.

Careful observation has disclosed that the Nuthatches do not suck the sap from trees, but that they knock off bits of decayed or loose bark with the beak to obtain the grubs or larvae beneath. They are beneficial to vegetation. Ignorance is responsible for the misapplied names given to many of our well disposed and useful birds, and it would be well if teachers were to discourage the use of inappropriate names and familiarize the children with those recognized by the best authorities.

Referring to the Nuthatches Mr. Baskett says: "They are little bluish gray birds, with white undervests—sometimes a little soiled. Their tails are ridiculously short, and never touch the tree; neither does the body, unless they are suddenly affrighted, when they crouch and look, with their beaks extended, much like a knot with a broken twig on it. I have sometimes put the bird into this attitude by clapping my hands loudly near the window. It is an impulse that seems to come to the bird before flight, especially if the head should be downward. His arrival is sudden, and seems often to be distinguished by turning a somersault before alighting, head downward, on the tree trunk, as if he had changed his mind so suddenly about alighting that it unbalanced him.

"I once saw two Nuthatches at what I then supposed was a new habit. One spring day some gnats were engaged in their little crazy love waltzes in the air, forming small whirling clouds, and the birds left off bark-probing and began capturing insects on the wing. They were awkward about it with their short wings, and had to alight frequently to rest. I went out to them, and so absorbed were they that they allowed me to approach within a yard of a limb that they came to rest upon, where they would sit and pant till they caught their breath, when they went at it again. They seemed fairly to revel in a new diet and a new exercise."

SUMMARY

Page 83.

YELLOW WARBLER.—*Dendroica æstiva*. Other names: "Summer Yellow-bird," "Wild Canary," "Yellow-poll Warbler."

RANGE—The whole of North America; breeding throughout its range. In winter, the whole of middle America and northern South America.

NEST—Built in an apple tree, cup-shaped, neat and compact, composed of plant fibres, bark, etc.

EGGS—Four or five; greenish-white, spotted.

HERMIT THRUSH.—*Turdus aonalaschkæ pallasii*. Other names: "Swamp Angel," "Ground Swamp Robin."

RANGE—Eastern North America, breeding from northern United States northward; wintering from about latitude 40° to the Gulf coast.

NEST—On the ground, in some low, secluded spot, beneath shelter of deep shrubbery. Bulky and loosely made of leaves, bark, grasses, mosses, lined with similar finer material.

EGGS—Three or four; of greenish blue, unspotted.

SONG SPARROW.—*Melospiza fasciata*.

RANGE—Eastern United States and British Provinces, west to the Plains, breeding chiefly north of 40°, except east of the Alleghenies.

NEST—On the ground, or in low bushes, of grasses, weeds, and leaves, lined with fine grass stems, roots, and, in some cases, hair.

EGGS—Four to seven; varying in color from greenish or pinkish white to light bluish green, spotted with dark reddish brown.

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO.—*Coccyzus americanus*. Other names: "Rain Crow," "Rain Dove," and "Chow-Chow."

RANGE—Eastern North America to British Provinces, west to Great Plains, south in winter, West Indies and Costa Rica.

NEST—In low tree or bush, of dried sticks, bark strips and catkins.

EGGS—Two to four; of glaucous green which fades on exposure to the light.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMING BIRD.—*Trochilus colubris*.

RANGE—Eastern North America to the Plains north to the fur countries, and south in winter to Cuba and Veragua.

NEST—A circle an inch and a half in diameter, made of fern wool, etc., shingled with lichens to match the color of the branch on which it is saddled.

EGGS—Two; pure white, the size of soup beans.

HOUSE WREN.—*Troglodytes aedon*.

RANGE—Eastern United States and southern Canada, west to the Mississippi Valley; winters in southern portions.

NEST—Miscellaneous rubbish, sticks, grasses, hay, and the like.

EGGS—Usually seven; white, dotted with reddish brown.

PHOEBE.—*Sayornis phæbe*. Other names: "Pewit," "Pewee."

RANGE—Eastern North America; in winter south to Mexico and Cuba.

NEST—Compactly and neatly made of mud and vegetable substances, with lining of grass and feathers.

EGGS—Four or five; pure white, sometimes sparsely spotted with reddish brown dots at larger end.

Page 110.

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET.—*Regulus calendula*.

RANGE—Entire North America, wintering in the South and in northern Central America.

NEST—Very rare, only six known; of hair, feathers, moss, etc., bulky, globular, and partly pensile.

EGGS—Five to nine; dull whitish or pale puffy, speckled.

Page 113.

MOURNING DOVE.—*Zenaidura macrura*. Other names: “Carolina Dove,” “Turtle Dove.”

RANGE—Whole of temperate North America, south to Panama and the West Indies.

NEST—Rim of twigs sufficient to retain the eggs.

EGGS—Usually two; white.

Page 118.

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH.—*Sitta carolinensis*. Other name: “Sapsucker,” improperly called.

RANGE—Eastern United States and British Provinces.

NEST—Decayed trunk of tree or stub, from two to six feet from ground, composed of chicken feathers, hair, and dry leaves.

EGGS—Five to eight; white with a roseate tinge, speckled with reddish brown and a slight tinge of purple.

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