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BIRDS

A MONTHLY SERIAL

ILLUSTRATED BY COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY

DESIGNED TO PROMOTE

KNOWLEDGE OF BIRD-LIFE

VOLUME II.

CHICAGO
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BIRDS.

ILLUSTRATED BY COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY.

VOL. II. OCTOBER. NO. 4.

BIRDS IN CAPTIVITY.

It was our intention in this article to give a number of instances of a pathetic nature concerning the sufferings of the various species of birds which it has been, and still is, a habit with many people to keep confined in cages totally inadequate for any other purpose than that of cruelty. The argument that man has no moral right to deprive an innocent creature of liberty will always be met with indifference by the majority of people, and an appeal to their intelligence and humanity will rarely prove effective. To capture singing birds for any purpose is, in many states, prohibited by statute. But the law is violated. Occasionally an example is made of one or more transgressors, but as a rule the officers of the law, whose business it should be to prevent it, manifest no interest whatever in its execution. The bird trappers as well know that it is against the law, but so long as they are unmolested by the police, they will continue the wholesale trapping. A contemporary recently said: “It seems strange that this bird-catching industry should increase so largely simultaneously with the founding of the Illinois Audubon Society. The good that that society has done in checking the habit of wearing birds in bonnets, seems to have been fairly counterbalanced by the increase in the number of songsters captured for cage purposes. These trappers choose the nesting season as most favorable for their work, and every pair of birds they catch means the loss of an entire family in the shape of a set of eggs or a nestful of young left to perish slowly by starvation.”

This is the way the trappers proceed. They are nearly all Germans. Bird snaring is a favorite occupation in Germany and the fondness for the cruel work was not left behind by the emigrants. More’s the pity. These fellows fairly swarm with their bird limes and traps among the suburbs, having an eye only to the birds of brightest plumage and sweetest song. “They use one of the innocents as a bait to lure the others to a prison.” “Two of the trappers,” says one who watched them, “took their station at the edge of an open field, skirted by a growth of willows. Each had two cage traps. The device was divided into two parts by wires running horizontally and parallel to the plane of the floor. In the lower half of each cage was a male American Goldfinch. In the roof of the traps were two little hinged doors, which turned backward and upward, leaving an opening. Inside the upper compartment of the trap, and accessible through the doorway in the roof, was a swinging perch. The traps

were placed on stumps among the growth of thistles and dock weed, while the trappers hid behind the trees. The Goldfinches confined in the lower sections of the traps had been the victims of the trappers earlier in the season, and the sight of their familiar haunts, the sunlight, the breeze, and the swaying willow branches, where so often they had perched and sung, caused them to flutter about and to utter pathetically the call note of their days of freedom. It is upon this yearning for liberty and its manifestation that the bird trappers depend to secure more victims. No sooner does the piping call go forth from the golden throats of the little prisoners, than a reply comes from the thistle tops, far down the field. A moment more and the traps are surrounded with the black and yellow beauties. The fact that one of their own kind is within the curious little house which confronts them seems to send all their timidity to the winds and they fairly fall over one another in their endeavor to see what it all means. Finally one finds the doorway in the roof and drops upon the perch within. Instantly the doors close and a Goldfinch is a prisoner."

Laurence Sterne alone, of sentimental writers, has put in adequate language something of the feeling that should stir the heart of the sympathetic, at least, on seeing the unjust confinement of innocent birds. The Starling, which is the subject of his elevated sentiment, will appear in an early number of BIRDS. Sterne had just been soliloquizing somewhat favorably of the Bastile, when a voice, which he took to be that of a child, complained "it could not get out." "I looked up and down the passage, and seeing neither man, woman, nor child, I went out without further attention. In my return back through the passage, I heard the same words repeated twice over, and looking up, I saw it was a Starling hung in a little cage. 'I can't get out, I can't get out,' said the Starling. I stood looking at the Bird, and to every person who came through the passage, it ran fluttering to the side, towards which they approached it, with the same lamentation of its captivity. 'I can't get out,' said the Starling. 'God help thee!' said I, 'but I'll let thee out, cost what it will;' so I turned about the cage to get the door. It was twisted and double-twisted so fast with wire, there was no getting it open without pulling the cage to pieces. I took both hands to it. The bird flew to the place where I was attempting its deliverance, and thrusting his head through the trellis, pressed his breast against it as if impatient. 'I fear, poor creature,' said I, 'I can't set thee at liberty.' 'No,' said the Starling, 'I can't get out,' 'I can't get out,' said the Starling. I vow I never had my affections more tenderly awakened; or do I remember an incident in my life where the dissipated spirits, to which my reason had been a bubble, were so suddenly called home. Mechanical as the notes were, yet so true in tune to Nature were they chanted, that disguise thyself as thou wilt, still, 'Slavery,' said I, 'still thou art a bitter draught; and though thousands in all ages have been made to drink of thee, thou art no less bitter on that account. No, thou thrice sweet and gracious goddess liberty, whose taste is grateful, and ever will be so, till nature herself shall change; no tint of woods can spot thy snowy mantle.'"

The bird in his cage pursued Sterne into his room, where he composed his apostrophe to liberty. It would be well indeed, if a sentiment could be aroused which would prohibit absolutely the caging of birds, as well as their wanton destruction, and if the children are taught that "tenderness which is the charm of youth," another generation will see it accomplished.

—C. C. MARBLE.

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER.

THE BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER.

IF the children had had the naming of birds we venture to say that it would have been more appropriately done, and “Blackburnian,” as many other names of Warblers, would have had no place in literature. There are about seventy-five well known Warblers, nearly all with common names indicating the most characteristic colors or habits, or partly descriptive of the bird itself. The common names of this beautiful Warbler are Orange-throated Warbler and Hemlock Warbler. Some one has suggested that it should be called the Torch Bird, for “half a dozen of them as they flash about in the pines, raising their wings and jerking their tails, make the darkest shadows seem breaking into little tongues of flame.”

The Orange-throat is only migratory in Illinois, passing through in spring and fall, its summer home being chiefly if not wholly, to the northward, while it passes the winter in Central America and northern South America. It is found in New York and in portions of Massachusetts, frequenting the coniferous forests, and building its nest in bushes or small trees a few feet above the ground. Dr. C. Hart Merriam found a pair of these birds nesting in a grove of large white pines in Lewis County, New York. In the latter part of May the female was observed building, and on the second of June the nest contained four fresh eggs of the Warbler and one of the Cow bird. The nest was saddled on the horizontal limb about eight feet from the ground and about ten feet from the trunk. Nests have been found in pine trees in Southern Michigan at an elevation of forty feet. In all cases the nests are placed high in hemlocks or pines, which are the bird’s favorite resorts. From all accounts the nests of this species are elegantly and compactly made, consisting of a densely woven mass of spruce twigs, soft vegetable down, rootlets, and fine shreds of bark. The lining is often intermixed with horse hairs and feathers. Four eggs of greenish-white or very pale bluish-green, speckled or spotted, have usually been found in the nests.

The autumnal male Warblers resemble the female. They have two white bands instead of one; the black stripes on the side are larger; under parts yellowish; the throat yellowish, passing into purer yellow behind. Few of our birds are more beautiful than the full plumaged male of this lovely bird, whose glowing orange throat renders it a conspicuous object among the budding and blossoming branches of the hemlocks. Chapman says, coming in May, before the woods are fully clad, he

seems like some bright plumaged tropical bird who has lost his way and wandered to northern climes. The summer is passed among the higher branches in coniferous forests, and in the early fall the bird returns to surroundings which seem more in keeping with its attire.

Mr. Minot describes the Blackburnian Warbler's summer song as resembling the syllables *wee-see-wee-see*, while in the spring its notes may be likened to *wee-see-wee-see, tsee, tsee, tsee*, repeated, the latter syllables being on ascending scale, the very last shrill and fine.

THE LOST MATE.

Shine! Shine! Shine!
Pour down your warmth, great Sun!
While we bask—we two together.

Two together!
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,
Day come white, or night come black,
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,
Singing all time, minding no time,
If we two but keep together.

Till of a sudden,
May be killed, unknown to her mate,
One forenoon the she-bird crouched not on the nest,
Nor returned that afternoon, nor the next,
Nor ever appeared again.

And thence forward, all summer, in the sound of the sea,
And at night, under the full of moon, in calmer weather,
Over the hoarse surging of the sea,
Or flitting from briar to briar by day,
I saw, I heard at intervals, the remaining one.

Blow! blow! blow!
Blow up, sea-winds, along Paumanok's shore!
I wait and I wait, till you blow my mate to me.

—Walt Whitman.

GOLDFINCH.

From col. F. M. Woodruff.

THE AMERICAN GOLDFINCH.

“Look, Mamma, look!” cried a little boy, as one day late in June my mate and I alighted on a thistle already going to seed. “Such a lovely bird! How jolly he looks, with that black velvet hat drawn over his eyes!”

“That’s a Goldfinch,” replied his mamma; “sometimes called the Jolly Bird, the Thistle Bird, the Wild Canary, and the Yellow Bird. He belongs to the family of Weed Warriors, and is very useful.”

“He sings like a Canary,” said Bobbie. “Just hear him talking to that little brown bird alongside of him.”

That was my mate, you see, who *is* rather plain looking, so to please him I sang my best song, “*Per-chic-o-ree, per-chic-o-ree*.”

“That sounds a great deal better,” said Bobbie; “because it’s not sung by a little prisoner behind cage bars, I guess.”

“It certainly is wilder and more joyous,” said his mamma. “He is very happy just now, for he and his mate are preparing for housekeeping. Later on, he will shed his lemon-yellow coat, and then you won’t be able to tell him from his mate and little ones.”

“How they are gobbling up that thistle-down,” cried Bobbie. “Just look!”

“Yes,” said his mamma, “the fluff carries the seed, like a sail to which the seed is fastened. By eating the seed, which otherwise would be carried by the wind all over the place, these birds do a great amount of good. The down they will use to line their nests.”

“How I should like to peep into their nest,” said Bobbie; “just to peep, you know; not to rob it of its eggs, as boys do who are not well brought up.”

My mate and I were so pleased at that, we flew off a little way, chirping and chattering as we went.

“Up and down, up and down,” said Bobbie; “how prettily they fly.”

“Yes,” said his mamma; “that is the way you can always tell a Goldfinch when in the air. A dip and a jerk, singing as he flies.”

“What other seeds do they eat, mamma?” presently asked Bobbie.

“The seeds of the dandelion, the sunflower, and wild grasses generally. In the winter, when these are not to be had, the poor little fellows have a very hard time. People with kind hearts, scatter canary seed over their lawns to the merry birds for their summer songs, and for keeping down the weeds.”

THE GOLDFINCH.

ACCORDING to one intelligent observer, the Finches are, in Nature’s economy, entrusted with the task of keeping the weeds in subjection, and the gay and elegant little Goldfinch is probably one of the most useful, for its food is found to consist, for the greater part, of seeds most hurtful to the works of man. “The charlock that so often chokes his cereal crops is partly kept in bounds by his vigilance, and the dock, whose rank vegetation would, if allowed to cast all its seeds, spread barrenness around, is also one of his store houses, and the rank grasses, at their seeding time, are his chief support.” Another writer, whose study of this bird has been made with care, calls our American Goldfinch one of the loveliest of birds. With his elegant plumage, his rhythmical, undulatory flight, his beautiful song, and his more beautiful soul, he ought to be one of the best beloved, if not one of the most famous; but he has never yet had half his deserts. He is like the Chickadee, and yet different. He is not so extremely confiding, nor should I call him merry. But he is always cheerful, in spite of his so-called plaintive note, from which he gets one of his names, and always amiable. So far as I know, he never utters a harsh sound; even the young ones asking for food, use only smooth, musical tones. During the pairing season, his delight often becomes rapturous. To see him then, hovering and singing,—or, better still, to see the devoted pair hovering together, billing and singing,—is enough to do even a cynic good. The happy lovers! They have never read it in a book, but it is written on their hearts:

“The gentle law that each should be
The other’s heaven and harmony.”

In building his nest, the Goldfinch uses much ingenuity, lichens and moss being woven so deeply into the walls that the whole surface is quite smooth. Instead of choosing the forks of a bough, this Finch likes to make its nest near the end of a horizontal branch, so that it moves about and dances up and down as the branch is swayed by the wind. It might be thought that the eggs would be shaken out by a tolerably sharp breeze, and such would indeed be the case, were they not kept in their place by the form of the nest. On examination, it will be seen to have the edge thickened and slightly turned inward, so that when the nest is tilted on one side by the swaying of the bough, the eggs are still retained within. It is lined with vegetable down, and on this soft bed repose five pretty eggs, white, tinged with blue, and diversified with small grayish purple spots.

A curious story is told of a caged Goldfinch, which in pleasant weather always hung in a window. One day, hearing strange bird voices, the owner looked up from her seat and saw a Catbird trying to induce the Finch to eat a worm it had brought for it. By dint of coaxing and feeding the wild bird, she finally induced it to come often to the window, and one day, as she sat on the porch, the Catbird brought a berry and tried to put it into her mouth. We have often seen sparrows come to the window of rooms where canaries were imprisoned, but it has uniformly been to get food and not to administer it. The Catbird certainly thus expressed its gratitude.

CHIMNEY SWIFT.

From col. Eugene Bliss.

THE CHIMNEY SWIFT.

CHIEF POKAGON, of the Pottawattamie Indians, in an article in *The Osprey*, writes delightfully of the Chimney Swift, and we quote a portion of it describing a peculiar habit of the bird. The chief was a youth when he made the observation, and he writes in the second person:

“As you look, you see the head of the young chief is turning slowly around, watching something high in air above the stream; you now begin to look in the same direction, catching glimpses every now and then, of the segment of a wild revolving ring of small unnumbered birds circling high above the trees. Their twittering notes and whizzing wings create a musical, but wild, continued roar. You now begin to realize he is determined to understand all about the feathered bees, as large as little birds, the village boy had seen. The circle continues to decrease in size, but increases the revolution until all the living, breathing ring swings over the stream in the field of your vision, and you begin to enquire what means all this mighty ingathering of such multitude of birds. The young chief in admiration claps his hands, leaping towards the stream. The twittering, whizzing roar continues to increase; the revolving circle fast assumes a funnel shape, moving downward until the point reaches the hollow in the stub, pouring its living mass therein until the last bird dropped out of sight. Rejoicing in wonder and admiration, the youth walks round the base of the stub, listening to the rumbling roar of fluttering wings within. Night comes on, he wraps his blanket closer about him, and lies down to rest until the coming day, that he may witness the swarming multitudes pass out in early morning. But not until the hour of midnight does he fall asleep, nor does he wake until the dawn of day, when, rising to his feet, he looks upward to the skies. One by one the stars disappear. The moon grows pale. He listens. Last night’s familiar roar rings in his ears. He now beholds swarming from out the stub the living, breathing mass, forming in funnel shape, revolving like a top, rising high in air, then sweeping outward into a wide expanding ring, until the myriads of birds are scattered wide, like leaves before the whirlwind.”

And then what do they do? Open the mouth of a swallow that has been flying, and turn out the mass of small flies and other insects that have been collected there. The number packed into its mouth is almost incredible, for when relieved from the constant pressure to which it is subjected, the black heap begins to swell and

enlarge, until it attains nearly double its former size.

Chimney Swallow is the name usually applied to this Swift. The habit of frequenting chimneys is a recent one, and the substitution of this modern artificial home for hollow trees illustrates the readiness with which it adapts itself to a change in surroundings. In perching, they cling to the side of the chimney, using the spine-pointed tails for a support. They are most active early in the morning and late in the afternoon, when one may hear their rolling twitter as they course about overhead.

The question whether Chimney Swifts break off twigs for their nests with their feet is now being discussed by ornithologists. Many curious and interesting observations have been made, and the momentous question will no doubt in time be placed beyond peradventure.

THE LARK.

Up with me! up with me into the clouds!
For thy song, Lark, is strong;
Up with me! Up with me into the clouds!
Singing, singing,
With clouds and sky about thee ringing.
Lift me, guide me till I find
That spot which seems so to thy mind.

I have walked through wildernesses dreary,
And to-day my heart is weary;
Had I now the wings of a Fairy
Up to thee would I fly.
There is madness about thee, and joy divine
In that song of thine;
Lift me, guide me high and high
To thy banqueting place in the sky.

—WORDSWORTH.

SHORE LARK.

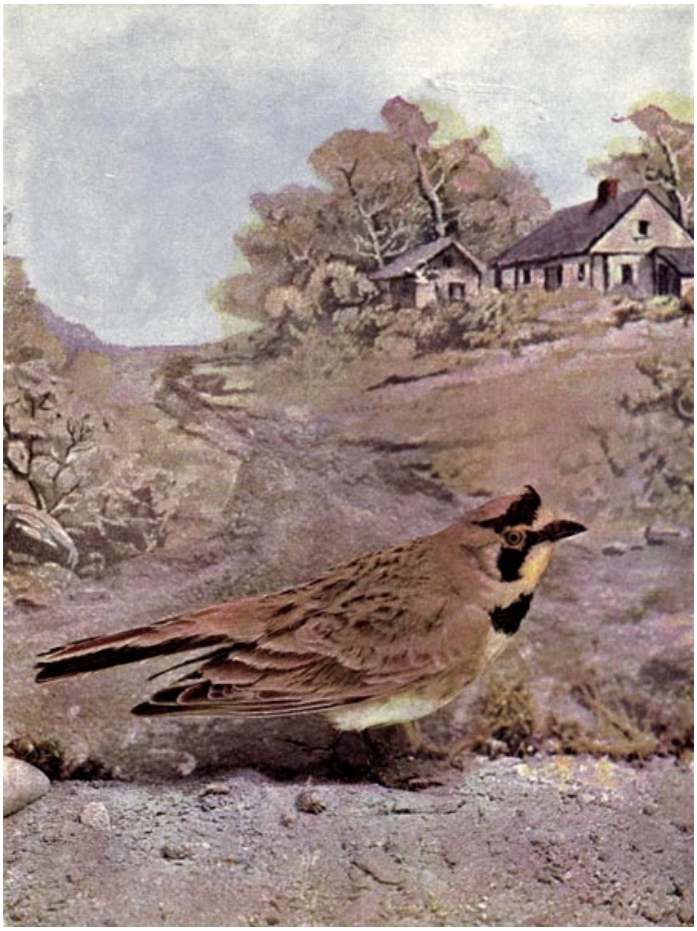
IF the variety of names by which this Lark is known is any indication of its popularity, its friends must be indeed numerous. Snow Lark, Snowbird, Prairie Lark, Sky Lark, American Sky Lark, Horned Lark, are a few of them. There is only one American Species, so far as known. It breeds in northeastern North America and Greenland, wintering in the United States. It also inhabits northern portions of the old world. The common name is derived from the tufts of black feathers over each ear, which the birds have the power of erecting at will like the so-called horns of some owls.

In the Eastern States, during the winter months, flocks of Horned Larks, varying in size from a dozen to those of a hundred or more, may be seen frequenting open plains, old fields, dry shores of bays, and the banks of rivers. According to Davie, as there are a number of geographical varieties of the Horned Lark, the greatest uncertainty has always attended their identification even by experts, and the breeding and winter ranges of the various subspecies do not yet seem to be clearly defined.

Audubon found this species on the low, mossy and sheltered hills along the dreary coast of Labrador. In the midst of the mosses and lichens that covered the rocks the bird imbedded its nest, composed of fine grasses, arranged in a circular form and lined with the feathers of grouse and other birds.

Chapman says these Larks take wing with a sharp, whistled note, and seek fresh fields or, hesitating, finally swing about and return to near the spot from which they were flushed. They are sometimes found associated with Snowflakes. The pinkish grey coloring is very beautiful, but in the Middle and Eastern States this bird is rarely seen in his spring garb, says an observer, and his winter plumage lacks the vivid contrasts and prime color.

As a singer the Shore Lark is not to be despised, especially in his nesting haunts. He has a habit of singing as he soars in the air, after the manner of the European Skylark.



HORNED LARK.

From col. F. M. Woodruff.

THE YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER.

When the veins of the birch overflow in the spring,
Then I sharpen my bill and make the woods ring,
Till forth gushes—rewarding my tap, tap, tap!
The food of us Suckers—the rich, juicy sap.
—C. C. M.

MANY wild birds run up and down trees, and it seems to make little difference which end up they are temporarily, skirmishing ever to the right and left, whacking the bark with their bills, then quiet a brief moment, and again skirmishing around the tree. Sometimes an apple tree, says a recent writer, will have a perfect circle, not seldom several rings or holes round the tree—holes as large as a buck shot. The little skirmisher makes these holes, and the farmer calls it a Sapsucker. And such it is. Dr. Coues, however, says it is not a bird, handsome as it is, that you would care to have come in great numbers to your garden or orchard, for he eats the sap that leaks out through the holes he makes in the trees. When a great many holes have been bored near together, the bark loosens and peels off, so that the tree is likely to die. The Sapsucker also eats the soft inner bark which is between the rough outside bark and the hard heart-wood of the tree, which is very harmful. Nevertheless the bird does much good in destroying insects which gather to feed on the oozing sap. It sweeps them up in its tongue, which is not barbed, like that of other woodpeckers, but has a little brush on the end of it. It lacks the long, extensile tongue which enables the other species to probe the winding galleries of wood-eating larvæ.

Mr. William Brewster states that throughout the White Mountains of New Hampshire, and in most sections of Northern Maine, the Yellow-Bellied Woodpeckers outnumber all the other species in the summer season. Their favorite nesting sites are large dead birches, and a decided preference is manifested for the vicinity of water, though some nests occur in the interior of woods. The average height of the nesting hole from the ground is about forty feet. Many of the nests are gourd-like in shape, with the ends very smoothly and evenly chiseled, the average depth being about fourteen inches. The labors of excavating the nest and those of rearing the young are shared by both sexes. While this Sapsucker is a winter resident in most

portions of Illinois, and may breed sparingly in the extreme northern portion, no record of it has been found.

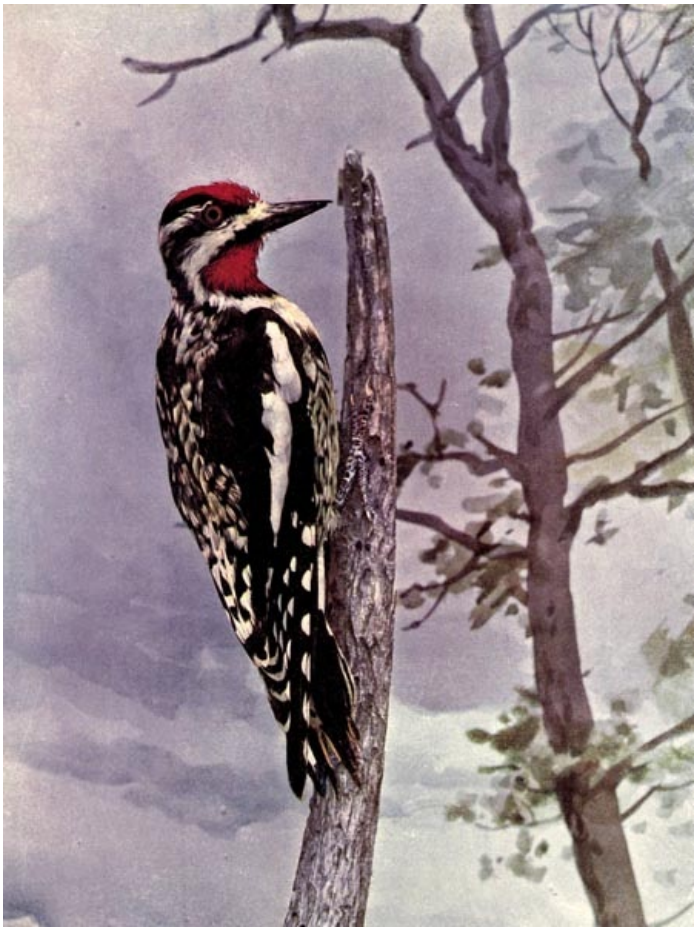
A walk in one of our extensive parks is nearly always rewarded by the sight of one or more of these interesting and attractive birds. They are usually so industriously engaged that they seem to give little attention to your presence, and hunt away, tapping the bole of the tree, until called elsewhere by some more promising field of operations. Before taking flight from one tree to another, they stop the insect search and gaze inquisitively toward their destination. If two of them meet, there is often a sudden stopping in the air, a twisting upward and downward, followed by a lively chase across the open to the top of a dead tree, and then a sly peeping round or over a limb, after the manner of all Woodpeckers. A rapid drumming with the bill on the tree, branch or trunk, it is said, serves for a love-song, and it has a screaming call note.

THE WARBLING VIREO.

THE Vireos are a family of singers and are more often heard than seen, but the Warbler has a much more musical voice, and of greater compass than any other member of the family. The song ripples like a brook, floating down from the leafiest tree-tops. It is not much to look at, being quite plainly dressed in contrast with the red-eyed cousin, the largest of the Vireos. In nesting time it prefers seclusion, though in the spring and mid-summer, when the little ones have flown, and nesting cares have ceased, it frequents the garden, singing in the elms and birches, and other tall trees. It rambles as well through the foliage of trees in open woodland, in parks, and in those along the banks of streams, where it diligently searches the under side of leaves and branches for insect life, “in that near-sighted way peculiar to the tribe.” It is a very stoic among birds, and seems never surprised at anything, “even at the loud report of a gun, with the shot rattling about it in the branches, and, if uninjured, it will stand for a moment unconcerned, or move along, peering on every side amongst the foliage, warbling its tender, liquid strains.”

The nest of this species is like that of the Red-eyed Vireo—a strong, durable, basket-like fabric, made of bark strips, lined with fine grasses. It is suspended by the brim in slender, horizontal forks of branches, at a great height from the ground.

The Vireo is especially numerous among the elms of Boston Common, where at almost any hour of the day, from early in the month of May, until long after summer has gone, may be heard the prolonged notes of the Warbling species, which was an especial favorite of Dr. Thomas M. Brewer, author of “History of North American Birds.” Its voice is not powerful, but its melody, it is said, is flute-like and tender, and its song is perhaps characterized more by its air of happy contentment, than by any other special quality. No writer on birds has grown enthusiastic on the subject, and Bradford Torrey alone among them does it scant justice, when he says this Vireo “is admirably named; there is no one of our birds that can more properly be said to warble. He keeps further from the ground than the others, and shows a strong preference for the elms of village streets, out of which his delicious music drops upon the ears of all passers underneath. How many of them hear it and thank the singer, is unhappily another question.”



YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER.

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WARBLING VIREO.

From col. F. M. Woodruff. Copyrighted by Nature Study Pub. Co., 1897,

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THE SAPSUCKER.

My Dear Young Friends:

During the long summer days, when you were enjoying golden vacation hours, I often took a peep at you from some dead tree limb or the side of a hemlock or beech. You saw me, perhaps, and were surprised at my courage; for other small birds whose voices you heard, but whose tiny bodies escaped your young eyes, appeared very timid in comparison.

But I am not so brave, after all, and know full well when my red hat is in danger. I am a good flyer, too, and can soon put a wide space between myself and certain wicked boys, who, I hope, by next vacation time will have learned so much about us that they will love every little feathered creature, and not seek to do them any harm.

Can you guess why I have such a queer name? I really ought to be popular in Illinois, for they tell me it is called the Sucker State, and that the people are proud of it. Well, I am called Sapsucker because much, if not most, of my food consists of the secret juices which flow through the entire body of the tree which you probably saw me running up and down and around. But you saw me, you say, very often on dead branches of trees, and surely they had no sap in them? No, but if you will look closely into my actions, you will see that I destroy many insects which drill their way into the wood and deposit their eggs. In my opinion, I do far more good than harm, though you will find some people who think otherwise.

Then, again, if there is utility in beauty, surely I am a benefit to every one. One day I heard a lady say that she never saw my head pop up from behind an old stump without bursting into laughter, I looked so funny. Now I took that as a compliment; for to give pleasure to those around us, I have heard, is one of our highest duties.

Next summer when you seek the pleasant places where I dwell,—in the old deadening where the trees wear girdles around them; in the open groves, where I flit from tree to tree; in the deep wooded districts, whence one hears the tinkling ripple of running waters, you may, if good and gentle, see pop up behind a stump the red hat of

SAPSUCKER.

THE WOOD PEWEE.

The listening Dryads hushed the woods;
  The boughs were thick, and thin and few
  The golden ribbons fluttering through;
Their sun-embroidered leafy hoods
  The lindens lifted to the blue;
Only a little forest-brook
The farthest hem of silence shook;
When in the hollow shades I heard—
Was it a spirit or a bird?
Or, strayed from Eden, desolate,
Some Peri calling to her mate,
Whom nevermore her mate would cheer?
  “Pe-ri! Pe-ri! Peer!”

To trace it in its green retreat
  I sought among the boughs in vain;
  And followed still the wandering strain
So melancholy and so sweet,
  The dim-eyed violets yearned with pain.

Long drawn and clear its closes were—
  As if the hand of Music through
  The sombre robe of Silence drew
A thread of golden gossamer;
  So pure a flute the fairy blue.

Like beggared princes of the wood,
In silver rags the birches stood;
The hemlocks, lordly counselors,
Were dumb; the sturdy servitors,
In beechen jackets patched and gray,
Seemed waiting spellbound all the day
That low, entrancing note to hear—
"Pe-wee! Pe-wee! Peer!"

"Dear bird," I said, "what is thy name?"
And thrice the mournful answer came,
So faint and far, and yet so near,
"Pe-wee! Pe-wee! Peer!"

—J. T. TROWBRIDGE.

WOOD PEWEE.

From col. Chi. Acad. Sciences. Copyrighted by Nature Study Pub. Co., 1897, Chicago.

THE WOOD PEWEE.

I am called the Wood Pewee, but I don't always stay in the woods. If you have an orchard or a nice garden, you will hear me singing there in June.

People think I am not a happy bird, because my song seems so sad. They are very much mistaken. I am just as happy as any other little fellow dressed in feathers, and can flirt and flutter with the best of them.

Pewee! Pewee! Peer!

That is my song, and my mate thinks it is beautiful. She is never far away, and always comes at my call.

Always, did I say?

No; one day, when we were busy building our nest—which is very pretty, almost as

dainty as that of our neighbor the Humming Bird—she flew away to quite a distance to find some soft lining-stuff on which to lay her eggs. I had been fetching and carrying all day the lichens to put round the nest, which was hidden among the thick leaves on the bough of a tree, and was resting by the side of it.

Pewee! Pewee! Peer!

"She will hear that," thought I, and again I sang it as loud as I could.

"I'll bring that fellow down, too," said a boy, who surely had never heard anything about our happy, innocent lives, and as I peered down at him, he flung a large stone, which struck the bough on which I sat. Oh, how frightened I was, and how quickly I flew away!

"He has killed my little mate," I thought. Still, I called in my plaintive way, *Pewee! Pewee! Peer!*

A faint, low cry led me to the foot of a large tree, and there on the ground lay my mate, struggling to rise and fly to me.

"I think my wing is broken," she sobbed. "Oh, that wicked, wicked boy!"

I petted her with my broad, flat beak, and after a while she was able to fly with me to our nest; but it was days and days before she was out of pain. I am sure if that boy sees my story in BIRDS, he will never give such an innocent *little* creature misery again.

I dress plainly, in a coat of olive and brown, and they *do* say my manners are stiff and abrupt.

But my voice is very sweet, and there is something about it which makes people say: "Dear little bird, sad little bird! what may your name be?"

Then I answer:

Pewee! Pewee! Peer!

THE WOOD PEWEE.

ALTHOUGH one of the most abundant species, common all over the United States, the retiring habits, plainness of dress, and quiet manners of this little bird have caused it to be comparatively little known. Dr. Brewer says that if noticed at all, it is generally confounded with the common Pewee, or Phoebe bird, though a little observation is sufficient to show how very distinct they are. The Wood Pewee will sit almost motionless for many minutes in an erect position, on some dead twig or other prominent perch, patiently watching for its insect prey. While its position is apparently so fixed, however, its eyes are constantly on the alert, and close watching will show that the bird now and then turns its head as its glance follows the course of some distant insect, while anon the feathers of the crown are raised, so as to form a sort of blunt pyramidal crest. This sentinel-like attitude of the Wood Pewee is in marked contrast to the restless motion of the Phoebe, who, even if perched, keeps its tail constantly in motion, while the bird itself seldom remains long in a fixed position. The notes of the two species (see August BIRDS) are as different as their habits, those of the Wood Pewee being peculiarly plaintive—a sort of wailing *pe-e-e-e-i, wee*, the first syllable emphasized and long drawn out, and the tone, a clear, plaintive, wiry whistle, strikingly different from the cheerful, emphatic notes of the true Pewee.

The Wood Pewee, like all of its family, is an expert catcher of insects, even the most minute, and has a remarkably quick perception of their near presence, even when the light of day has nearly gone and in the deep gloom of the thick woods. Dr. Brewer describes it as taking its station at the end of a low dead limb, from which it darts out in quest of insects, sometimes for a single individual, which it seizes with a sharp snap of its bill; and, frequently meeting insect after insect, it keeps up a constant snapping sound as it passes on, and finally returns to its post to resume its watch. While watching it occasionally twitters, with a quivering movement of the head and tail, uttering a feeble call-note, sounding like *pee-e*.

The nest of the Wood Pewee, which is always "saddled" and securely attached to a rather stout branch, usually lichen-covered, is said to be one of the most elegant examples of bird architecture. From beneath it so much resembles a natural portion of the limb, but for its betrayal by the owner, it would seldom be discovered. It is saucer-shaped, with thick walls, and the whole exterior is a beautiful "mosaic" of green, gray, and glaucous lichen. The eggs are a rich delicate cream color, ornamented by a "wreath" round the larger end of madder-brown, purple, and lilac spots.

The Wood Pewee has many admirers, a more interesting creature to watch while feeding being hard to imagine. Often you will find him in the parks. Sitting in some quiet, shady spot, if you wait, he will soon show himself as he darts from the fence post not far away, to return to it time after time with, possibly, the very insect that has been buzzing about your face and made you miserable. His movements are so quick that even the fly cannot elude him.

And to some he is pleasant as a companion. One who loves birds once saw this Flycatcher flying in a circle and repeating breathlessly his emphatic *chebec*. “He sang on the wing, and I have never heard notes which seemed more expressive of happiness.”

SNOW BUNTING.

From col. F. M. Woodruff.

THE SNOWFLAKE.

Bobbie didn’t want to go to school that morning, and he looked very cheerfully out upon the cloudy sky and falling flakes of snow, pretending to shiver a little when the angry gusts of wind blew the snow sharply into people’s faces.

“I guess it’s better for little boys like me to stay at home in such weather as this, mamma,” said he, all the while hoping the snow would soon be deep enough for him to ride down the hill on his sled.

Before his mamma could reply Bobbie gave a cry of delight which drew her at once to the window.

As from the snow clouds, on bold and rapid wing, came whirling down an immense flock of birds, white, streaked with gray and brown, chirping, calling to one another, the whole flock settling upon the open places in a field in front of Bobbie’s house.

“Oh, the dear little things,” said Bobbie, “they looked like little white angels dropping out of the clouds.”

“Those are our winter neighbors,” said his mamma, “the Snow Buntings or Snowflakes—they visit us only in winter, their summer homes being away up North near the Arctic Circle in the region of perpetual snow.”

“Do they build their nests in trees?” asked Bobbie, who never tired hearing about the birds.

“There are no trees in that bleak region, only scrubby bushes,” was the answer. “They build a thick, deep grassy nest, well lined with rabbit fur, or Snow Owl feathers, which they tuck under a ledge of rock or bunch of grass.”

“They chirrup just like sparrows,” reflected Bobbie, “can they sing?”

“They only sing when up in their Northern home. There a male Snowflake will sing as

merrily as his cousin the Goldfinch.”

“They look like Sparrows, too,” said Bobbie, “only whiter and softer, I think.”

“In the summer they are nearly all white, the brown edges having worn away, leaving them pure black and white. They are very shy and suspicious, and at the least sound you will see them all whirl aloft braving the blasts of winter like little heroes.”

“Well,” said Bobbie, after a while, “if those little soft white birds can go about in such weather, I guess I can too,” and in a few minutes with high rubber boots, and a fur cap drawn over his ears, off trudged Bobbie like another little hero to school.

THE SNOWFLAKE.

THIS charming bird comes to us at a time when his presence may be truly welcomed and appreciated, nearly all our summer companions of the feathered tribe having departed. He might not inappropriately be named the great Snowflake, though in winter he wears a warm brown cloak, with black stripes, brown collar, and a brown and white vest. In summer, however, he is snow white, with black on the back, wings, and tail. He lives all over northern North America, and in the United States as far south as Georgia.

About the first of November, flocks of Snowflakes may be seen arriving, the males chanting a very low and somewhat broken, but very pleasant song. Some call him White Snowbird, and Snow Bunting, according to locality. The birds breed throughout the Arctic regions of both continents, the National Museum at Washington possessing nests from the most northern points of Alaska, (Point Barrow), and from Labrador, as well as from various intermediate localities.

These birds are famous seed eaters, and are rarely found in trees. They should be looked for on the ground, in the air, for they are constantly seeking new feeding grounds, in the barn-yard, or about the hay stack, where seeds are plentiful. They also nest on the ground, building a deep, grassy nest, lined with rabbit fur or feathers, under a projecting ledge of rock or thick bunch of grass. It seems curious that few persons readily distinguish them from their sparrow cousins, as they have much more white about them than any other color. Last November multitudes of them invaded Washington Park, settling on the ground to feed, and flying up and scurrying away to successive pastures of promise. With their soft musical voices and gentle manners, they were a pleasing feature of the late Autumn landscape. “Chill November’s surly blast” making “field and forest bare,” had no terrors for them, but rather spread before them a feast of scattered seeds, winnowed by it from nature’s ripened abundance.

The Snowflakes disappear with the melting of their namesake, the snow. They are especially numerous in snowy seasons, when flocks of sometimes a thousand are seen in the old fields and meadows. It is unusual, though it has been known to breed in the Northern States. In July, 1831, Audubon found it nesting in the White Mountains, and Dr. J. A. Allen notes a pair as breeding near Springfield, Mass. The Arctic regions are its nesting place however, and these birds were probably belated on their return migration. The Snowflake and Shorelark are so much alike in habits, that the two species occasionally associate. Ernest E. Thompson says: “Apparently the Snowflakes get but little to eat, but in reality they always find enough to keep them in health and spirits, and are as fat as butter balls. In the mid-winter, in the far north, when the thermometer showed thirty degrees below zero, and the chill blizzard was blowing on the plains, I have seen this brave little bird gleefully chasing his fellows, and pouring out, as he flew, his sweet voluble song with as much spirit as ever Skylark has in the sunniest days of June.”

JUNCO.

From col. F. M. Woodruff.

THE SLATE-COLORED JUNCO.

BLACK SNOWBIRD, in most of the United States and in Ontario, where it is a common resident, and White Bill, are names more often applied to this species of Sparrow than the one of Junco, by which it is known to ornithologists. It nests in the mountains of northern Pennsylvania, New York, and New England, and is a resident throughout the year in northeastern Ohio, and in Michigan. In all probability, the Snowbird does not breed, even occasionally, anywhere within the limits of the state of Illinois, though individuals may in very rare instances be found several weeks after others have departed for the north, these having probably received some injury which prevents their migration. Prof. Forbes refers to such an instance, which came under his own observation. He saw on a tree in the edge of a wood, in the southern part of the state, an adult specimen of the Junco, and only one, which, he says, astonished him.

Mr. William L. Kells states that in Ontario this Junco selects a variety of places for nesting sites, such as the upturned roots of trees, crevices in banks, under the sides of logs and stumps, a cavity under broken sod, or in the shelter of grass or other vegetation. The nest is made of dry grasses, warmly and smoothly lined with hair. The bird generally begins to nest the first week of May, and nests with eggs are found as late as August. A nest of the Junco was found on the rafters of a barn in Connecticut.

Almost any time after the first of October, little excursion parties of Juncos may be looked for, and the custom continues all winter long. When you become acquainted with him, as you surely will, during his visit, you will like him more and more for his cheerful habits. He will come to your back door, and present his little food petition, very merrily indeed. He is very friendly with the Chick-a-dee, and they are often seen together about in the barn-yards, and he even ventures within the barn when seeds are frozen to the ground.

“The Doctor,” in *Citizen Bird*, tells this pretty story of his winter pets:

“My flock of Juncos were determined to brave all weathers. First they ate the seeds of all the weeds and tall grasses that reached above the snow, then they cleaned the honeysuckles of their watery black berries. When these were nearly gone, I began to

feed them every day with crumbs, and they soon grew very tame. At Christmas an ice storm came, and after that the cold was bitter indeed. For two days I did not see my birds; but on the third day, in the afternoon, when I was feeding the hens in the barn-yard, a party of feeble, half-starved Juncos, hardly able to fly, settled down around me and began to pick at the chicken food. I knew at a glance that after a few hours more exposure all the poor little birds would be dead. So I shut up the hens and opened the door of the straw-barn very wide, scattered a quantity of meal and cracked corn in a line on the floor, and crept behind the door to watch. First one bird hopped in and tasted the food; he found it very good and evidently called his brothers, for in a minute they all went in and I closed the door upon them. And I slept better that night, because I knew that my birds were comfortable. The next afternoon they came back again. I kept them at night in this way for several weeks, and one afternoon several Snowflakes came in with them." (See page 150.)

THE KINGBIRD.

IT is somewhat strange that there should be little unity of opinion concerning a bird as well known as is this charming fellow, who has at least one quality which we all admire—courage. We will quote a few of the opinions of well-known observers as to whether his other characteristics are admirable, and let the reader form his own conclusion.

John Burroughs says of him: "The exquisite of the family, and the braggart of the orchard, is the Kingbird, a bully that loves to strip the feathers off its more timid neighbors like the Bluebird, that feeds on the stingless bees of the hive, the drones, and earns the reputation of great boldness by teasing large hawks, while it gives a wide berth to the little ones." Decidedly, this classifies him with the English Sparrow. But we will hear Dr. Brewer: "The name, Kingbird, is given it on the supposition that it is superior to all other birds in the reckless courage with which it will maintain an unequal warfare. My own observations lead me to the conclusion that writers have somewhat exaggerated the quarrelsome disposition of this bird. I have never, or very rarely, known it to molest or attack any other birds than those which its own instinct prompts it to drive away in self-defense, such as Hawks, Owls, Eagles, Crows, Jays, Cuckoos, and Grackles." That Dr. Coues is a friend of the Kingbird, his language amply proves: "The Kingbird is not quarrelsome—simply very lively. He is the very picture of dash and daring in defending his home, and when he is teaching his youngsters how to fly. He is one of the best of neighbors, and a brave soldier. An officer of the guild of Sky Sweepers, also a Ground Gleaner and Tree Trapper killing robber-flies, ants, beetles, and rose-bugs. A good friend to horses and cattle, because he kills the terrible gadflies. Eats a little fruit, but chiefly wild varieties, and only now and then a bee." If you now have any difficulty in making up your verdict, we will present the testimony of one other witness, who is, we think, an original observer, as well as a delightful writer, Bradford Torrey. He was in the country. "Almost, I could have believed myself in Eden," he says. "But, alas, even the birds themselves were long since shut out of that garden of innocence, and as I started back toward the village a Crow went hurrying past me, with a Kingbird in hot pursuit. The latter was more fortunate than usual, or more plucky, actually alighting on the Crow's back, and riding for some distance. I could not distinguish his motions—he was too far away for that—but I wished him joy of his victory, and grace to improve it to the full. For it is scandalous that a bird of the Crow's cloth should be a thief; and so, although I reckon him among my friends—in truth, *because* I do so—I am always able to take it patiently when I see him chastised for his fault."

The Kingbird is a common bird in Eastern United States, but is rare west of the Rocky Mountains. It is perhaps better known by the name of Beebird or Bee-martin. The nest is placed in an orchard or garden, or by the roadside, on a horizontal bough or in the fork at a moderate height; sometimes in the top of the tallest trees along streams. It is bulky, ragged, and loose, but well capped and brimmed, consisting of twigs, grasses, rootlets, bits of vegetable down, and wool firmly matted together, and lined with feathers, hair, etc.

KING BIRD.

From col. F. M. Woodruff.

THE KINGBIRD.

You think, my young friends, because I am called Kingbird I should be large and fine looking.

Well, when you come to read about Kings in your history-book you will find that size has nothing to do with Kingliness. I have heard, indeed, that some of them were very puny little fellows, in mind as well as in body.

If it is courage that makes a king then I have the right to be called Kingbird. They say I have a reckless sort of courage, because I attack birds a great deal larger than myself.

I would not call it courage to attack anything smaller than myself, would you? A big man finds it easy to shoot a little bird in the air; and a big boy does not need to be brave to kill or cripple some poor little animal that crosses his path. He only needs to be a coward to do that!

I only attack my enemies,—the Hawks, Owls, Eagles, Crows, Jays, and Cuckoos. They would destroy my young family if I did not drive them away. Mr. Crow especially is a great thief. When my mate is on her nest I keep a sharp lookout, and when one of my enemies approaches I give a shrill cry, rise in the air, and down I pounce on his back; I do this more than once, and how I make the feathers fly!

The little hawks and crows I never attack, and yet they call me a bully. Sometimes I do go for a Song-bird or a Robin, but only when they come too near my nest. People wonder why I never attack the cunning Catbird. I'll never tell them, you may be sure!

To what family do I belong? To a large family called Flycatchers. Because some Kings are tyrants I suppose, they call me the Tyrant Flycatcher. Look for me next summer on top of a wire fence or dead twig of a tree, and watch me, every few minutes, dash into the air, seize a passing insect, and then fly back to the same perch again.

Any other names? Yes, some folks call me the Bee Bird or Bee Martin. Once in awhile I change my diet and do snap up a bee! but it is always a drone, not a honey-bee. Some ill-natured people say I choose the drones because they can't sting, and not because they are tramp bees and will not work.

Sing? Yes, when my mate is on her nest I please her with a soft pretty song, at other times my call-note is a piercing Kyrie-K-y-rie! I live with you only in the summer. When September comes I fly away to a warmer climate.

SUMMARY

Page 123.

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER.—*Dendroica blackburniæ.*

RANGE—Eastern North America; breeds from northern Minnesota and southern Maine northward to Labrador and southward along the Alleghenies to South Carolina; winters in the tropics.

NEST—Of fine twigs and grasses, lined with grasses and tendrils, in coniferous trees, ten to forty feet up.

EGGS—Four, grayish white or bluish white, distinctly and obscurely spotted, speckled, and blotched with cinnamon brown or olive brown.

Page 128.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH.—*Spinus tristis.* Other names: “Yellow-bird,” “Thistle-bird.”

RANGE—Eastern North America; breeds from South Carolina to southern Labrador; winters from the northern United States to the Gulf.

NEST—Externally, of fine grasses, strips of bark and moss, thickly lined with thistle down; in trees or bushes, five to thirty feet up.

EGGS—Three to six, pale bluish white.

Page 131.

CHIMNEY SWIFT.—*Chætura pelagica.* Other name: “Chimney Swallow.”

RANGE—Eastern North America; breeds from Florida to Labrador; winters in Central America.

NEST—A bracket-like basket of dead twigs glued together with saliva, attached to the wall of a chimney, generally about ten feet from the top, by the gummy secretions of the bird’s salivary glands.

EGGS—Four to six, white.

Page 135.

HORNED LARK.—*Otocoris alpestris.* Other name: “Shore Lark.”

RANGE—Breeds in northern Europe, Greenland, Newfoundland, Labrador, and Hudson Bay region; southward in winter into eastern United States to about latitude 35°.

NEST—Of grasses, on the ground.

EGGS—Three or four, pale bluish or greenish white, minutely and evenly speckled with pale grayish brown.

Page 140.

SAPSUCKER, YELLOW-BELLIED.—*Sphyrapicus varius.*

RANGE—Eastern North America; breeds from Massachusetts northward, and winters from Virginia to Central America.

NEST—About forty feet from the ground.

EGGS—Five to seven.

Page 141.

WARBLING VIREO.—*Vireo gilvus.* Other name: “Yellow-throated Vireo.”

RANGE—North America; breeds as far north as the Hudson Bay region; winters in the tropics.

NEST—Pensile, of grasses and plant fibres, firmly and smoothly interwoven, lined with fine grasses, suspended from a forked branch eight to forty feet up.

EGGS—Three or four, white, with a few specks or spots of black umber, or rufous-brown, chiefly about the larger end.

Page 146.

WOOD PEWEE.—*Contopus Virens.*

RANGE—Eastern North America; breeds from Florida to Newfoundland; winters in Central America.

NEST—Compact and symmetrical, of fine grasses, rootlets and moss, thickly covered with lichens, saddled on a limb, twenty to forty feet up.

EGGS—Three or four, white, with a wreath of distinct and obscure markings about the larger end.

Page 150.

SNOWFLAKE.—*Plectrophenax nivalis.* Other name: “Snow Bunting.”

RANGE—Northern parts of northern hemisphere, breeding in the arctic regions; in North America, south in Winter into the northern United States, irregularly to Georgia, southern Illinois, and Kansas.

NEST—Of grasses, rootlets, and moss, lined with finer grasses and feathers, on the ground.

EGGS—Four to seven, pale bluish white, thinly marked with umber or heavily spotted or washed with rufous-brown.

Page 153.

JUNCO—*Junco hyemalis.* Other name: “Snowbird.”

RANGE—North America; breeds from northern Minnesota to northern New York and southward along the summits of the Alleghenies to Virginia; winters southward to the Gulf States.

NEST—Of grasses, moss, and rootlets, lined with fine grasses and long hairs, on or near the ground.

EGGS—Four or five, white or bluish white, finely or evenly speckled or spotted, sometimes heavily blotched at the larger end with rufous-brown.

Page 158.

KINGBIRD.—*Tyrannus tyrannus.*

RANGE—North America north to New Brunswick and Manitoba; rare west of the Rocky Mountains; winters in Central and South America.

NEST—Compact and symmetrical, of weed-stocks, grasses, and moss, lined with plant down, fine grasses, and rootlets, generally at the end of a branch fifteen to twenty-five feet from the ground.

EGGS—Three to five, white, spotted with umber.

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