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BIRDS.

ILLUSTRATED BY COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY.

VOL. II.

DECEMBER, 1897.

No. 6.

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS.



WE had the pleasure of attending the Fifteenth Congress of the American Ornithologists' Union, which met and held its three days annual session in the American Museum of Natural History, New York City, November 9-11, 1897. Dr. C. Hart Merriam, of the Department of Agriculture, Washington D.C., presided, and there were present about one hundred and fifty of the members, resident in nearly all the states of the Union.

The first paper read was one prepared by J. C. Merrill, entitled "In Memoriam: Charles Emil Bendire." The character, accomplishments, and achievements of the deceased, whose valuable work in biographizing American birds is so well known to those interested in ornithology, were referred to in so appropriate a manner that the paper, though not elaborate as it is to be hoped it may ultimately be made, will no doubt be published for general circulation. Major Bendire's services to American ornithology are of indisputable value, and his untimely death eclipsed to some extent, possibly wholly, the conclusion of a series of bird biographies which, so far as they had appeared, were deemed to be adequate, if not perfect.

Mr. Frank M. Chapman, the well known authority on birds, and whose recent books are valuable additions to our literature, had, it may be presumed, a paper to read on the "Experiences of an Ornithologist in Mexico," though he did not read it. He made, on the contrary, what seemed to be an extemporaneous talk, exceedingly entertaining and sufficiently instructive to warrant a permanent place for it in the *Auk*, of which he is associate editor. We had the pleasure of examining the advance sheets of a new book from his pen, elaborately illustrated in color, and shortly to be published. Mr. Chapman is a comparatively young man, an enthusiastic student and observer, and destined to be recognized as one of our most scientific thinkers, as many of his published pamphlets already indicate. Our limited space precludes even

a reference to them now. His remarks were made the more attractive by the beautiful stuffed specimens with which he illustrated them.

Prof. Elliott Coues, in an address, "Auduboniana, and Other Matters of Present Interest," engaged the delighted attention of the Congress on the morning of the second day's session. His audience was large. In a biographical sketch of Audubon the Man, interspersed with anecdote, he said so many interesting things that we regret we omitted to make any notes that would enable us to indicate at least something of his characterization. No doubt just what he said will appear in an appropriate place. Audubon's portfolio, in which his precious manuscripts and drawings were so long religiously kept, which he had carried with him to London to exhibit to possible publishers, a book so large that two men were required to carry it, though the great naturalist had used it as an indispensable and convenient companion for so many years, was slowly and we thought reverently divested by Dr. Coues of its wrappings and held up to the surprised and grateful gaze of the spectators. It was dramatic. Dr. Coues is an actor. And then came the comedy. He could not resist the inclination to talk a little—not disparagingly, but truthfully, reading a letter never before published, of Swainson to Audubon declining to associate his name with that of Audubon "under the circumstances." All of which, we apprehend, will duly find a place on the shelves of public libraries.

We would ourself like to say something of Audubon as a man. To us his life and character have a special charm. His was a beautiful youth, like that of Goethe. His love of nature, for which he was willing to make, and did make, sacrifices, will always be inspiring to the youth of noble and gentle proclivities; his personal beauty, his humanity, his love-life, his domestic virtues, enthrall the ingenuous mind; and his appreciation—shown in his beautiful compositions—of the valleys of the great river, *La Belle Rivière*, through which its waters, shadowed by the magnificent forests of Ohio and Kentucky, wandered—all of these things have from youth up shed a sweet fragrance over his memory and added greatly to our admiration of and appreciation for the man.

So many subjects came before the Congress that we cannot hope to do more than mention the titles of a few of them. Mr. Sylvester D. Judd discussed the question of "Protective Adaptations of insects from an Ornithological Point of View;" Mr. William C. Rives talked of "Summer Birds of the West Virginia Spruce Belt;" Mr. John N. Clark read a paper entitled "Ten Days among the Birds of Northern New Hampshire;" Harry C. Oberholser talked extemporaneously of "Liberian Birds," and in a most entertaining and instructive manner, every word he said being worthy of large print and liberal embellishment; Mr. J. A. Allen, editor of *The Auk*, said a great deal that was new and instructive about the "Origin of Bird Migration;" Mr. O. Widmann read an interesting paper on "The Great Roosts on Gabberet Island, opposite North St. Louis;" J. Harris Reed presented a paper on "The Terns of Gull Island, New York;" A. W. Anthony read of "The Petrels of Southern California," and Mr. George H. Mackay talked interestingly of "The Terns of Penikese Island, Mass."

There were other papers of interest and value. "A Naturalist's Expedition to East Africa," by D. G. Elliot, was, however, the *pièce de résistance* of the Congress. The lecture was delivered in the lecture hall of the Museum, on Wednesday at 8 p. m. It was illustrated by stereopticon views, and in the most remarkable manner. The pictures were thrown upon an immense canvas, were marvellously realistic, and were so much admired by the great audience, which overflowed the large lecture hall, that the word demonstrative does not describe their enthusiasm. But the lecture! Description, experience, suffering, adventure, courage, torrid heat, wild beasts, poisonous insects, venomous serpents, half-civilized peoples, thirst,—almost enough of torture to justify the use of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner in illustration,—and yet a perpetual, quiet, rollicking, jubilant humor, all-pervading, and, at the close, on the lecturer's return once more to the beginning of civilization, the eloquent picture of the Cross, "full high advanced," all combined, made this lecture, to us, one of the very few platform addresses entirely worthy of the significance of unfading portraiture.

C. C. MARBLE.



MOUNTAIN BLUE BIRD.

From col. Chi. Acad. Sciences.

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THE MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD.

IN an early number of BIRDS we presented a picture of the common Bluebird, which has been much admired. The mountain Bluebird, whose beauty is thought to excel that of his cousin, is probably known to few of our readers who live east of the Rocky Mountain region, though he is a common winter sojourner in the western part of Kansas, beginning to arrive there the last of September, and leaving in March and April. The habits of these birds of the central regions are very similar to those of the eastern, but more wary and silent. Even their love song is said to be less loud and musical. It is a rather feeble, plaintive, monotonous warble, and their chirp and twittering notes are weak. They subsist upon the cedar berries, seeds of plants, grasshoppers, beetles, and the like, which they pick up largely upon the ground, and occasionally scratch for among the leaves. During the fall and winter they visit the plains and valleys, and are usually met with in small flocks, until the mating season.

Nests of the Mountain Bluebird have been found in New Mexico and Colorado, from the foothills to near timber line, usually in deserted Woodpecker holes, natural cavities in trees, fissures in the sides of steep rocky cliffs, and, in the settlements, in suitable locations about and in the adobe buildings. In settled portions of the west it nests in the cornice of buildings, under the eaves of porches, in the nooks and corners of barns and outhouses, and in boxes provided for its occupation. Prof. Ridgway found the Rocky Mountain Bluebird nesting in Virginia City, Nevada, in June. The nests were composed almost entirely of dry grass. In some sections, however, the inner bark of the cedar enters largely into their composition. The eggs are usually five, of a pale greenish-blue.

The females of this species are distinguished by a greener blue color and longer wings, and this bird is often called the Arctic Bluebird. It is emphatically a bird of the mountains, its visits to the lower portions of the country being mainly during winter.

Heaped in the hollows of the grove, the autumn leaves lie dead;
They rustle to the eddying gust, and to the rabbits' tread.
The Robin and the Wren are flown, and from the shrubs the Jay,
And from the wood-top calls the Crow all through the gloomy day.

—BRYANT.

THE ENGLISH SPARROW.

"Oh, it's just a common Sparrow," I hear Bobbie say to his mamma, "why, I see lots of them on the street every day."

Of course you do, but for all that you know very little about me I guess. Some people call me "Hoodlum," and "Pest," and even "Rat of the Air." I hope you don't. It is only the folks who don't like me that call me ugly names.

Why don't they like me?

Well, in the first place the city people, who like fine feathers, you know, say I am not pretty; then the farmers, who are not grateful for the insects I eat, say I devour the young buds and vines as well as the ripened grain. Then the folks who like birds with fine feathers, and that can sing like angels, such as the Martin and the Bluebird and a host of others, say I drive them away, back to the forests where they came from.

Do I do all these things?

I'm afraid I do. I like to have my own way. Maybe you know something about that yourself, Bobbie. When I choose a particular tree or place for myself and family to live in, I am going to have it if I have to fight for it. I do chase the other birds away then, to be sure.

Oh, no, I don't always succeed. Once I remember a Robin got the better of me, so did a Catbird, and another time a Baltimore Oriole. When I can't whip a bird myself I generally give a call and a whole troop of Sparrows will come to my aid. My, how we do enjoy a fuss like that!

A bully? Well, yes, if by that you mean I rule around my own house, then I *am* a bully. My mate has to do just as I say, and the little Sparrows have to mind their papa, too.

"Don't hurt the little darlings, papa," says their mother, when it comes time for them to fly, and I hop about the nest, scolding them at the top of my voice. Then I scold her for daring to talk to me, and sometimes make her fly away while I teach the young ones a thing or two. Once in a while a little fellow among them will "talk back." I don't mind that though, if he is a Cock Sparrow and looks like his papa.

No, we do not sing. We leave that for the Song Sparrows. We talk a great deal, though. In the morning when we get up, and at night when we go to bed we chatter a great deal. Indeed there are people shabby enough to say that we are great nuisances about that time.



ENGLISH SPARROW.

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THE ENGLISH SPARROW.

THE English Sparrow was first introduced into the United States at Brooklyn, New York, in the years 1851 and '52. The trees in our parks were at that time infested with a canker-worm, which wrought them great injury, and to rid the trees of these worms was the mission of the English Sparrow.

In his native country this bird, though of a seed-eating family (Finch), was a great insect eater. The few which were brought over performed, at first, the duty required of them; they devoured the worms and stayed near the cities. With the change of climate, however, came a change in their taste for insects. They made their home in the country as well as the cities, and became seed and vegetable eaters, devouring the young buds on vines and trees, grass-seed, oats, rye, and other grains.

Their services in insect-killing are still not to be despised. A single pair of these Sparrows, under observation an entire day, were seen to convey to their young no less than forty grubs an hour, an average exceeding three thousand in the course of a week. Moreover, even in the autumn he does not confine himself to grain, but feeds on various seeds, such as the dandelion, the sow-thistle, and the groundsel; all of which plants are classed as weeds. It has been known, also, to chase and devour the common white butterfly, whose caterpillars make havoc among the garden plants.

The good he may accomplish in this direction, however, is nullified to the lovers of the beautiful, by the war he constantly wages upon our song birds, destroying their young, and substituting his unattractive looks and inharmonious chirps for their beautiful plumage and soul-inspiring songs.

Mrs. Olive Thorne Miller in "Bird Ways" gives a fascinating picture of the wooing of a pair of Sparrows in a maple tree, within sight of her city window, their setting up house-keeping, domestic quarrel, separation, and the bringing home, immediately after, of a new bride by the Cock Sparrow.

She knows him to be a domestic tyrant, a bully in fact, self-willed and violent, holding out, whatever the cause of disagreement, till he gets his own will; that the voices of the females are less harsh than the males, the chatter among themselves being quite soft, as is their "baby-talk" to the young brood.

That they delight in a mob we all know; whether a domestic skirmish or danger to a nest, how they will all congregate, chirping, pecking, scolding, and often fighting in a fierce yet amusing way! One cannot read these chapters of Mrs. Miller's without agreeing with Whittier:

"Then, smiling to myself, I said,—
How like are men and birds!"

Although a hardy bird, braving the snow and frost of winter, it likes a warm bed, to which it may retire after the toils of the day. To this end its resting place, as well as its nest, is always stuffed with downy feathers. Tramp, Hoodlum, Gamin, Rat of the Air! Notwithstanding these more or less deserved names, however, one cannot view a number of homeless Sparrows, presumably the last brood, seeking shelter in any corner or crevice from a winter's storm, without a feeling of deep compassion. The supports of a porch last winter made but a cold roosting place for three such wanderers within sight of our study window, and never did we behold them, 'mid a storm of sleet and rain, huddle down in their cold, ill-protected beds, without resolving another winter should see a home prepared for them.

ALLEN'S HUMMING BIRD.

THE Humming birds, with their varied beauties, constitute the most remarkable feature of the bird-life of America. They have absolutely no representatives in any other part of the world, the Swifts being the nearest relatives they have in other countries. Mr. Forbes says that they abound most in mountainous countries, where the surface and productions of the soil are most diversified within small areas. They frequent both open and rare and inaccessible places, and are often found on the snowy peaks of Chimborazo as high as 16,000 feet, and in the very lowest valleys in the primeval forests of Brazil, the vast palm-covered districts of the deltas of the Amazon and Orinoco, the fertile flats and savannahs of Demarara, the luxurious and beautiful region of Xalapa, (the realm of perpetual sunshine), and other parts of Mexico. Many of the highest cones of extinct and existing volcanoes have also furnished great numbers of rare species.

These birds are found as small as a bumble bee and as large as a Sparrow. The smallest is from Jamaica, the largest from Patagonia.

Allen's Hummer is found on the Pacific coast, north to British Columbia, east to southern Arizona.

Mr. Langille, in "Our Birds in their Haunts," beautifully describes their flights and manner of feeding. He says "There are many birds the flight of which is so rapid that the strokes of their wings cannot be counted, but here is a species with such nerve of wing that its wing strokes cannot be seen. 'A hazy semi-circle of indistinctness on each side of the bird is all that is perceptible.' Poised in the air, his body nearly perpendicular, he seems to hang in front of the flowers which he probes so hurriedly, one after the other, with his long, slender bill. That long, tubular, fork-shaped tongue may be sucking up the nectar from those rather small cylindrical blossoms, or it may be capturing tiny insects housed away there. Much more like a large sphynx moth hovering and humming over the flowers in the dusky twilight, than like a bird, appears this delicate, fairy-like beauty. How the bright green of the body gleams and glistens in the sunlight. Each imperceptible stroke of those tiny wings conforms to the mechanical laws of flight in all their subtle complications with an ease and gracefulness that seems spiritual. Who can fail to note that fine adjustment of the organs of flight to aerial elasticity and gravitation, by which that astonishing bit of nervous energy can rise and fall almost on the perpendicular, dart from side to side, as if by magic, or, assuming the horizontal position, pass out of sight like a shooting star? Is it not impossible to conceive of all this being done by that rational calculation which enables the rower to row, or the sailor to sail his boat?"

"What heavenly tints in mingling radiance fly,
Each rapid movement gives a different dye;
Like scales of burnished gold they dazzling show,
Now sink to shade, now like a furnace glow."



ALLENS HUMMING BIRD.

From col. F. M. Woodruff.

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THE GREEN-WINGED TEAL.

Just a common Duck?

No, I'm not. There is only one other Duck handsomer than I am, and he is called the Wood Duck. You have heard something about him before. I am a much smaller Duck, but size doesn't count much, I find when it comes to getting on in the world—in *our* world, that is. I have seen a Sparrow worry a bird four times its size, and I expect you have seen a little boy do the same with a big boy many a time.

What is the reason I'm not a common Duck?

Well, in the first place, I don't waddle. I can walk just as gracefully as I can swim. Your barn-yard Duck can't do that. I can run, too, without getting all tangled up in the grass, and he can't do that, either. But sometimes I don't mind associating with the common Duck. If he lives in a nice big barn-yard, that has a good pond, and is fed with plenty of grain, I visit him quite often.

Where do I generally live?

Well, along the edges of shallow, grassy waters, where I feed upon grass, seeds, acorns, grapes, berries, as well as insects, worms, and small snails. I walk quite a distance from the water to get these things, too.

Can I fly?

Indeed I can, and very swiftly. You can see I am no common Duck when I can swim, and walk, and fly. *You* can't do the last, though you can the first two.

Good to eat?

Well, yes, they say when I feed on rice and wild oats I am perfectly delicious. Some birds were, you see, born to sing, and flit about in the trees, and look beautiful, while some were born to have their feathers taken off, and be roasted, and to look fine in a big dish on the table. The Teal Duck is one of those birds. You see we are useful as well as pretty. We don't mind it much if you eat us and say, "what a fine bird!" but when you call us "tough," that hurts our feelings.

Good for Christmas?

Oh, yes, or any other time—when you can catch us! We fly so fast that it is not easy to do; and can dive under the water, too, when wounded.

Something about our nests?

Oh, they are built upon the ground, in a dry tuft of grass and weeds and lined with feathers. My mate often plucks the feathers from her own breast to line it. Sometimes she lays ten eggs, indeed once she laid sixteen.

Such a family of Ducklings as we had that year! You should have seen them swimming after their mother, and all crying, *Quack, quack, quack!* like babies as they were.

THE GREEN-WINGED TEAL.

A

HANDSOME little Duck indeed is this, well known to sportsmen, and very abundant throughout North America. It is migratory in its habits, and nests from Minnesota and New Brunswick northward, returning southward in winter to Central America and Cuba.

The green wing is commonly found in small flocks along the edges of shallow, grassy waters, feeding largely upon seeds of grasses, small acorns, fallen grapes or berries, as well as aquatic insects, worms, and small snails. In their search for acorns these ducks are often found quite a distance from the water, in exposed situations feeding largely in the night, resting during the day upon bogs or small bare spots, closely surrounded and hidden by reeds and grasses.

On land this Duck moves with more ease and grace than any other of its species except the Wood Duck, and it can run with considerable speed. In the water also it moves with great ease and rapidity, and on the wing it is one of the swiftest of its tribe. From the water it rises with a single spring and so swiftly that it can be struck only by a very expert marksman; when wounded it dives readily.

As the Teal is more particular in the selection of its food than are most Ducks, its flesh, in consequence, is very delicious. Audubon says that when this bird has fed on wild oats at Green Bay, or soaked rice in the fields of Georgia or Carolina, it is much superior to the Canvas back in tenderness, juiciness, and flavor.

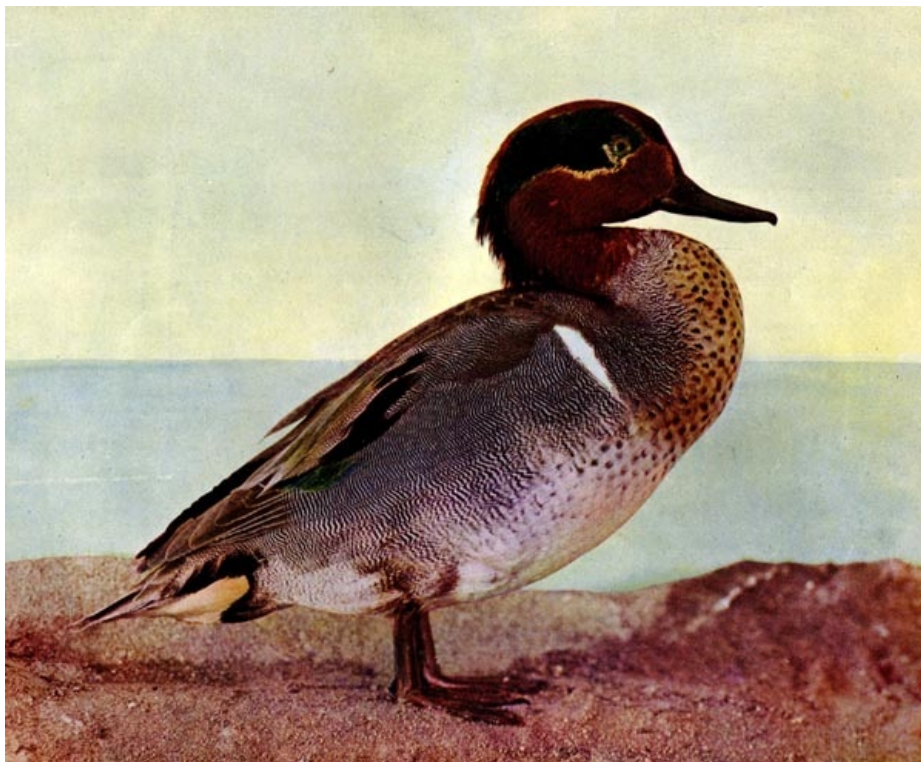
G. Arnold, in the *Nidologist*, says while traveling through the northwest he was surprised to see the number of Ducks and other wild fowl in close proximity to the railway tracks. He found a number of Teal nests within four feet of the rails of the Canadian Pacific in Manitoba. The warm, sun-exposed banks along the railway tracks, shrouded and covered with thick grass, afford a very fair protection for the nests and eggs from water and marauders of every kind. As the section men seldom disturbed them—not being collectors—the birds soon learned to trust them and would sit on their nests by the hour while the men worked within a few feet of them.

The green-winged Teal is essentially a fresh-water bird, rarely being met with near the sea. Its migrations are over the land and not along the sea shore. It has been seen to associate with the Ducks in a farmer's yard or pond and to come into the barn-yard with tame fowls and share the corn thrown out for food.

The nests of the Teal are built upon the ground, generally in dry tufts of grass and often quite a distance from the water. They are made of grass, and weeds, etc., and lined with down. In Colorado under a sage brush, a nest was found which had been scooped in the sand and lined warmly with down evidently taken from the bird's own breast, which was plucked nearly bare. This nest contained ten eggs.

The number of eggs, of a pale buff color, is usually from eight to twelve, though frequently sixteen or eighteen have been found. It is far more prolific than any of the Ducks resorting to Hudson's Bay, and Mr. Hearn says he has seen the old ones swimming at the head of seventeen young when the latter were not much larger than walnuts.

In autumn the males usually keep in separate flocks from the females and young. Their notes are faint and piping and their wings make a loud whistling during flight.



GREEN-WINGED TEAL.

From col. Chi. Acad. Sciences.

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THE BLACK GROUSE.

Alone on English moors I've seen the Black Cock stray,
Sounding his earnest love-note on the air.

—ANON.



WELL known as the Black Cock is supposed to be, we fancy few of our readers have ever seen a specimen. It is a native of the more southern countries of Europe, and still survives in many portions of the British Islands, especially those localities where the pine woods and heaths afford it shelter, and it is not driven away by the presence of human habitation.

The male bird is known to resort at the beginning of the nesting season to some open spot, where he utters his love calls, and displays his new dress to the greatest advantage, for the purpose of attracting as many females as may be willing to consort with him. His note when thus engaged is loud and resonant, and can be heard at a considerable distance. This crowing sound is accompanied by a harsh, grating, stridulous kind of cry which has been compared to the noise produced by whetting a scythe. The Black Cock does not pair, but leaves his numerous mates to the duties of maternity and follows his own desires while they prepare their nests, lay their eggs, hatch them, and bring up the young. The mother bird, however, is a fond, watchful parent, and when she has been alarmed by man or a prowling beast, has been known to remove her eggs to some other locality, where she thinks they will not be discovered.

The nest is carelessly made of grasses and stout herbage, on the ground, under the shelter of grass and bushes. There are from six to ten eggs of yellowish gray, with spots of light brown. The young are fed first upon insects, and afterwards on berries, grain, and the buds and shoots of trees.

The Black Grouse is a wild and wary creature. The old male which has survived a season or two is particularly shy and crafty, distrusting both man and dog, and running away as soon as he is made aware of approaching danger.

In the autumn the young males separate themselves from the other sex and form a number of little bachelor establishments of their own, living together in harmony until the next nesting season, when they all begin to fall in love; "the apple of discord is thrown among them by the charms of the hitherto repudiated sex, and their rivalries lead them into determined and continual battles, which do not cease until the end of the season restores them to peace and sobriety."

The coloring of the female is quite different from that of the male Grouse. Her general color is brown, with a tinge of orange, barred with black and speckled with

the same hue, the spots and bars being larger on the breast, back, and wings, and the feathers on the breast more or less edged with white. The total length of the adult male is about twenty-two inches, and that of the female from seventeen to eighteen inches. She also weighs nearly one-third less than her mate, and is popularly termed the Heath Hen.

THE AMERICAN FLAMINGO.

IN this interesting family of birds are included seven species, distributed throughout the tropics. Five species are American, of which one reaches our southern border in Florida. Chapman says that they are gregarious at all seasons, are rarely found far from the seacoasts, and their favorite resorts are shallow bays or vast mud flats which are flooded at high water. In feeding the bill is pressed downward into the mud, its peculiar shape making the point turn upward. The ridges along its sides serve as strainers through which are forced the sand and mud taken in with the food.

The Flamingo is resident in the United States only in the vicinity of Cape Sable, Florida, where flocks of sometimes a thousand of these rosy vermillion creatures are seen. A wonderful sight indeed. Mr. D. P. Ingraham spent more or less of his time for four seasons in the West Indies among them. He states that the birds inhabit the shallow lagoons and bays having soft clayey bottoms. On the border of these the nest is made by working the clay up into a mound which, in the first season, is perhaps not more than a foot high and about eight inches in diameter at the top and fifteen inches at the base. If the birds are unmolested they will return to the same nesting place from year to year, each season augmenting the nest by the addition of mud at the top, leaving a slight depression for the eggs. He speaks of visiting the nesting grounds where the birds had nested the previous year and their mound-like nests were still standing. The birds nest in June. The number of eggs is usually two, sometimes only one and rarely three. When three are found in a nest it is generally believed that the third has been laid by another female.

The stature of this remarkable bird is nearly five feet, and it weighs in the flesh six or eight pounds. On the nest the birds sit with their long legs doubled under them. The old story of the Flamingo bestriding its nest in an ungainly attitude while sitting is an absurd fiction.

The eggs are elongate-ovate in shape, with a thick shell, roughened with a white flakey substance, but bluish when this is scraped off. It requires thirty-two days for the eggs to hatch.

The very fine specimen we present in BIRDS represents the Flamingo feeding, the upper surface of the unique bill, which is abruptly bent in the middle, facing the ground.



BLACK GROUSE.



FLAMINGO.

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THE BIRDS OF BETHLEHEM.

I.

I heard the bells of Bethlehem ring—
Their voice was sweeter than the priests';
I heard the birds of Bethlehem sing
Unbidden in the churchly feasts.

II.

They clung and swung on the swinging chain
High in the dim and incensed air;
The priest, with repetitions vain,
Chanted a never ending prayer.

III.

So bell and bird and priest I heard,
But voice of bird was most to me—
It had no ritual, no word,
And yet it sounded true and free.

IV.

I thought child Jesus, were he there,
Would like the singing birds the best,
And clutch his little hands in air
And smile upon his mother's breast.

R. W. GILDER, in *The Century*.

THE BIRD'S STORY.

"I once lived in a little house,
And lived there very well;
I thought the world was small and round,
And made of pale blue shell.

I lived next in a little nest,

Nor needed any other;
I thought the world was made of straw,
And brooded by my mother.

One day I fluttered from the nest
To see what I could find.
I said: 'The world is made of leaves,
I have been very blind.'

At length I flew beyond the tree,
Quite fit for grown-up labors;
I don't know how the world *is* made,
And neither do my neighbors."



VERDIN.

From col. F. M. Woodruff.

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THE VERDIN.

A DAINTY little creature indeed is the Yellow-headed Bush Tit, or Verdin, being smaller than the largest North American Humming Bird, which inhabits southern Arizona and southward. It is a common bird in suitable localities throughout the arid regions of Northern Mexico, the southern portions of Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and in Lower California. In spite of its diminutive size it builds a remarkable structure for a nest—large and bulky, and a marvel of bird architecture. Davie says it is comparatively easy to find, being built near the ends of the branches of some low, thorny tree or shrub, and in the numerous varieties of cacti and thorny bushes which grow in the regions of its home.

The nest is globular, flask-shaped or retort shape in form, the outside being one mass of thorny twigs and stems interwoven, while the middle is composed of flower-stems and the lining is of feathers. The entrance is a small circular opening. Mr. Atwater says that the birds occupy the nests during the winter months. They are generally found nesting in the high, dry parts of the country, away from tall timber, where the thorns are the thickest. From three to six eggs are laid, of a bluish or greenish-white or pale blue, speckled, chiefly round the larger end, with reddish brown.

“The woods were made for the hunters of dreams,
The brooks for the fishers of song.
To the hunters who hunt for the gunless game
The woods and the streams belong.
There are thoughts that moan from the soul of the pine,
And thoughts in the flower-bell curled,
And the thoughts that are blown from the scent of the fern
Are as new and as old as the world.”

THE BRONZED GRACKLE.

You can call me the Crow Blackbird, little folks, if you want to. People generally call me by that name.

I look something like the Crow in the [March](#) number of BIRDS, don't I? My dress is handsomer than his, though. Indeed I am said to be a splendid looking bird, my bronze coat showing very finely in the trees.

The Crow said *Caw, Caw, Caw!* to the little boys and girls. That was his way of talking. My voice is not so harsh as his. I have a note which some people think is quite sweet; then my throat gets rusty and I have some trouble in finishing my tune. I puff out my feathers, spread my wings and tail, then lifting myself on the perch force out the other notes of my song. Maybe you have seen a singer on the stage, instead of a perch, do the same thing. Had to get on his tip-toes to reach a high note, you know.

Like the Crow I visit the cornfields, too. In the spring when the man with the plow turns over the rich earth, I follow after and pick up all the grubs and insects I can find. They would destroy the young corn if I didn't eat them. Then, when the corn grows up, I, my sisters, and my cousins, and my aunts drop down into the field in great numbers. Such a picnic as we do have! The farmers don't seem to like it, but certainly they ought to pay us for our work in the spring, don't you think? Then I think worms as a steady diet are not good for anybody, not even a Crow, do you?

We like nuts, too, and little crayfish which we find on the edges of ponds. No little boy among you can beat us in going a-nutting.

We Grackles are a very sociable family, and like to visit about among our neighbors. Then we hold meetings and all of us try to talk at once. People say we are very noisy at such times, and complain a good deal. They ought to think of their own meetings. They do a great deal of talking at such times, too, and sometimes break up in a fight.

How do I know? Well, a little bird told me so.

Yes, we build our nest as other birds do; ours is not a dainty affair; any sort of trash mixed with mud will do for the outside. The inside we line with fine dry grass. My mate does most of the work, while I do the talking. That is to let the Robin and other birds know I am at home, and they better not come around.

Yours,
MR. BRONZED GRACKLE.



BRONZED GRACKLE

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THE BRONZED GRACKLE.

First come the Blackbirds clatt'rin in tall trees,
And settlin' things in windy congresses,
Queer politicians though, for I'll be skinned
If all on 'em don't head against the wind.

—LOWELL.

BY the more familiar name of Crow Blackbird this fine but unpopular bird is known, unpopular among the farmers for his depredations in their cornfields, though the good he does in ridding the soil, even at the harvest season, of noxious insects and grubs should be set down to his credit.

The Bronzed Grackle or Western Crow Blackbird, is a common species everywhere in its range, from the Alleghenies and New England north to Hudson Bay, and west to the Rocky Mountains. It begins nesting in favorable seasons as early as the middle of March, and by the latter part of April many of the nests are finished. It nests anywhere in trees or bushes or boughs, or in hollow limbs or stumps at any height. A clump of evergreen trees in a lonely spot is a favorite site, in sycamore groves along streams, and in oak woodlands. It is by no means unusual to see in the same tree several nests, some saddled on horizontal branches, others built in large forks, and others again in holes, either natural or those made by the Flicker. A long list of nesting sites might be given, including Martin-houses, the sides of Fish Hawk's nests, and in church spires, where the Blackbirds' "clatterin'" is drowned by the tolling bell.

The nest is a coarse, bulky affair, composed of grasses, knotty roots mixed with mud, and lined with fine dry grass, horse hair, or sheep's wool. The eggs are light greenish or smoky blue, with irregular lines, dots and blotches distributed over the surface. The eggs average four to six, though nests have been found containing seven.

The Bronze Grackle is a bird of many accomplishments. He does not hop like the ordinary bird, but imitates the Crow in his stately walk, says one who has watched him with interest. He can pick beech nuts, catch cray fish without getting nipped, and fish for minnows alongside of any ten-year-old. While he is flying straight ahead you do not notice anything unusual, but as soon as he turns or wants to alight you see his tail change from the horizontal to the vertical—into a rudder. Hence he is called keel-tailed.

The Grackle is as omnivorous as the Crow or Blue Jay, without their sense of humor, and whenever opportunity offers will attack and eat smaller birds, especially the defenseless young. His own meet with the like fate, a fox squirrel having been seen to emerge from a hole in a large dead tree with a young Blackbird in its mouth. The Squirrel was attacked by a number of Blackbirds, who were greatly excited, but it paid no attention to their demonstrations and scampered off into the wood with his prey. Of their quarrels with Robins and other birds much might be written. Those who wish to investigate their remarkable habits will do well to read the acute and elaborate observations of Mr. Lyndes Jones, in a recent Bulletin of Oberlin College.

He has studied for several seasons the remarkable Bronze Grackle roost on the college campus at that place, where thousands of these birds congregate from year to year, and, though more or less offensive to some of the inhabitants, add considerably to the attractiveness of the university town.

THE RING-NECKED PHEASANT.



We are fortunate in being able to present our readers with a genuine specimen of the Ring-Necked species of this remarkable family of birds, as the Ring-Neck has been crossed with the Mongolian to such an extent, especially in many parts of the United States, that they are practically the same bird now. They are gradually taking the place of Prairie Chickens, which are becoming extinct. The hen will hatch but once each year, and then in the late spring. She will hatch a covey of from eighteen to twenty-two young birds from each setting. The bird likes a more open country than the quail, and nests only in the open fields, although it will spend much time roaming through timberland. Their disposition is much like that of the quail, and at the first sign of danger they will rush into hiding. They are handy and swift flyers and runners. In the western states they will take the place of the Prairie Chicken, and in Ohio will succeed the Quail and common Pheasant.

While they are hardy birds, it is said that the raising of Mongolian-English Ring-Necked Pheasants is no easy task. The hens do not make regular nests, but lay their eggs on the ground of the coops, where they are picked up and placed in a patent box, which turns the eggs over daily. After the breeding season the male birds are turned into large parks until February.

The experiment which is now being made in Ohio—if it can be properly so termed, thousands of birds having been liberated and begun to increase—has excited widespread interest. A few years ago the Ohio Fish and Game Commission, after hearing of the great success of Judge Denny, of Portland, Oregon, in rearing these birds in that state, decided it would be time and money well spent if they should devote their attention and an “appropriation” to breeding and rearing these attractive game birds. And the citizens of that state are taking proper measures to see that they are protected. Recently more than two thousand Pheasants were shipped to various counties of the state, where the natural conditions are favorable, and where the commission has the assurance that the public will organize for the purpose of protecting the Pheasants. A law has been enacted forbidding the killing of the birds until November 15, 1900. Two hundred pairs liberated last year increased to over two thousand. When not molested the increase is rapid. If the same degree of success is met with between now and 1900, with the strict enforcement of the game laws, Ohio will be well stocked with Pheasants in a few years. They will prove a great benefit to the farmers, and will more than recompense them for the little grain they may take from the fields in destroying bugs and insects that are now agents of destruction to the growing crops.

The first birds were secured by Mr. E. H. Shorb, of Van Wert, Ohio, from Mr. Verner De Guise, of Rahway, N. J. A pair of Mongolian Pheasants, and a pair of English Ring-Necks were secured from the Wyandache Club, Smithtown, L. I. These birds were crossed, thus producing the English Ring-Neck Mongolian Pheasants, which are larger and better birds, and by introducing the old English Ring-Neck blood, a bird was produced that does not wander, as the thoroughbred Mongolian Pheasant does.

Such of our readers as appreciate the beauty and quality of this superb specimen will no doubt wish to have it framed for the embellishment of the dining room.



RING-NECKED PHEASANT.

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BIRD MISCELLANY.

Knowledge never learned of schools
Of the wild bee's morning chase,
Of the wild-flowers' time and place,
Flight of fowl and habitude
Of the tenants of the wood;
How the tortoise bears his shell;
How the woodchuck digs his cell;
And the ground-mole makes his well;
How the robin feeds her young;
How the oriole's nest is hung.

—WHITTIER.

Consider the marvellous life of a bird and the manner of its whole existence.... Consider the powers of that little mind of which the inner light flashes from the round bright eye; the skill in building its home, in finding its food, in protecting its mate, in serving its offspring, in preserving its own existence, surrounded as it is on all sides by the most rapacious enemies....

When left alone it is such a lovely little life—cradled among the hawthorn buds, searching for aphidæ amongst apple blossoms, drinking dew from the cup of a lily; awake when the gray light breaks in the east, throned on the topmost branch of a tree, swinging with it in the sunshine, flying from it through the air; then the friendly quarrel with a neighbor over a worm or berry; the joy of bearing grass-seed to his mate where she sits low down amongst the docks and daisies; the triumph of singing the praise of sunshine or of moonlight; the merry, busy, useful days; the peaceful sleep, steeped in the scent of the closed flower, with head under one wing and the leaves forming a green roof above.

—QUIDA.

THE YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT.

I am often heard, but seldom seen. If I were a little boy or a little girl, grown people would tell me I should be seen and not heard. That's the difference between you and a bird like me, you see.

It would repay you to make my acquaintance. I am such a jolly bird. Sometimes I get all the dogs in my neighborhood howling by whistling just like their masters. Another time I mew like a cat, then again I give some soft sweet notes different from those of

any bird you ever heard.

In the spring, when my mate and I begin house-keeping, I do some very funny things, like the clown in a circus. I feel so happy that I go up a tree branch by branch, by short flights and jumps, till I get to the very top. Then I launch myself in the air, as a boy dives when he goes swimming, and you would laugh to see me flirting my tail, and dangling my legs, coming down into the thicket by odd jerks and motions.

It really is so funny that I burst out laughing myself, saying, *chatter-chatter, chat-chat-chat-chat!* I change my tune sometimes, and it sounds like *who who*, and *tea-boy*.

You must be cautious though, if you want to see me go through my performance. Even when I am doing those funny things in the air I have an eye out for my enemies. Should I see you I would hide myself in the bushes and as long as you were in sight I would be angry and say *chut, chut!* as cross as could be.

Have I any other name?

Yes, I am called the Yellow Mockingbird. But that name belongs to another. His picture was in the [June](#) number of BIRDS, so you know something about him. They say I imitate other birds as he does. But I do more than that. I can throw my voice in one place, while I am in another.

It is a great trick, and I get lots of sport out of it.

Do you know what that trick is called? If not, ask your papa. It is such a long word I am afraid to use it.

About my nest?

Oh, yes, I am coming to that. I arrive in this country about May 1, and leave for the south in the winter. My nest is nothing to boast of; rather big, made of leaves, bark, and dead twigs, and lined with fine grasses and fibrous roots. My mate lays eggs, white in color, and our little ones are, like their papa, very handsome.



YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT.

From col. F. M. Woodruff.
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THE YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT.



COMMON name for this bird, the largest of the warblers, is the Yellow Mockingbird. It is found in the eastern United States, north to the Connecticut Valley and Great Lakes; west to the border of the Great Plains; and in winter in eastern Mexico and Guatemala. It frequents the borders of thickets, briar patches, or wherever there is a low, dense growth of bushes—the thornier and more impenetrable the better.

“After an acquaintance of many years,” says Frank M. Chapman, “I frankly confess that the character of the Yellow-Crested Chat is a mystery to me. While listening to his strange medley and watching his peculiar actions, we are certainly justified in calling him eccentric, but that there is a method in his madness no one who studies him can doubt.”

By many observers this bird is dubbed clown or harlequin, so peculiar are his antics or somersaults in the air; and by others “mischief maker,” because of his ventriloquistic and imitating powers, and the variety of his notes. In the latter direction he is surpassed only by the Mockingbird.

The mewling of a cat, the barking of a dog, and the whistling sound produced by a Duck’s wings when flying, though much louder, are common imitations with him. The last can be perfectly imitated by a good whistler, bringing the bird instantly to the spot, where he will dodge in and out among the bushes, uttering, if the whistling be repeated, a deep toned emphatic *tac*, or hollow, resonant *meow*.

In the mating season he is the noisiest bird in the woods. At this time he may be observed in his wonderful aerial evolutions, dangling his legs and flirting his tail, singing vociferously the while—a sweet song different from all his jests and jeers—and descending by odd jerks to the thicket. After a few weeks he abandons these clown-like maneuvers and becomes a shy, suspicious haunter of the depths of the thicket, contenting himself in taunting, teasing, and misleading, by his variety of calls, any bird, beast, or human creature within hearing.

All these notes are uttered with vehemence, and with such strange and various modulations as to appear near or distant, in the manner of a ventriloquist. In mild weather, during moonlight nights, his notes are heard regularly, as though the performer were disputing with the echoes of his own voice.

“Perhaps I ought to be ashamed to confess it,” says Mr. Bradford Torrey, after a visit to the Senate and House of Representatives at Washington, “but after all, the congressman in feathers interested me most. I thought indeed, that the *Chat* might well enough have been elected to the lower house. His volubility and waggish manners would have made him quite at home in that assembly, while his orange colored waistcoat would have given him an agreeable conspicuity. But, to be sure, he would have needed to learn the use of tobacco.”

The nest of the Chat is built in a thicket, usually in a thorny bush or thick vine five feet above the ground. It is bulky, composed exteriorly of dry leaves, strips of loose grape vine bark, and similar materials, and lined with fine grasses and fibrous roots. The eggs are three to five in number, glossy white, thickly spotted with various shades of rich, reddish brown and lilac; some specimens however have a greenish tinge, and others a pale pink.

SUMMARY.

Page 203.

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD.—*Sialia arctica*. Other names: “Rocky Mountain” and “Arctic Bluebird.”

RANGE—Rocky Mountain region, north to Great Slave Lake, south to Mexico, west to the higher mountain ranges along the Pacific.

NEST—Placed in deserted Woodpecker holes, natural cavities of trees, nooks and corners of barns and outhouses; composed of dry grass.

EGGS—Commonly five, of pale, plain greenish blue.

Page 208.

ENGLISH SPARROW.—*Passer domesticus*. Other names: “European Sparrow,” “House Sparrow.”

RANGE—Southern Europe. Introduced into and naturalized in North America, Australia, and other countries.

NEST—Of straw and refuse generally, in holes, boxes, trees, any place that will afford protection.

EGGS—Five to seven.

Page [211](#).

ALLEN'S HUMMING BIRD.—*Selasphorus alleni*.

RANGE—Pacific coast, north to British Columbia, east to southern Arizona.

NEST—Plant down, covered with lichens.

EGGS—Two, white.

Page [215](#).

GREEN-WINGED TEAL.—*Anas carolinensis*.

RANGE—North America, migrating south to Honduras and Cuba.

NEST—On the ground, in a thick growth of grass.

EGGS—Five to eight, greenish-buff, usually oval.

Page [220](#).

BLACK GROUSE.—*Tetrao tetrix*. Other name: "Black Cock."

RANGE—Southern Europe and the British Islands.

NEST—Carelessly made, of grasses and stout herbage, on the ground.

EGGS—Six to ten, of yellowish gray, with spots of light brown.

Page [221](#).

AMERICAN FLAMINGO.—*Phoenicopterus ruber*.

RANGE—Atlantic coasts of sub-tropical and tropical America; Florida Keys.

NEST—Mass of earth, sticks, and other material scooped up to the height of several feet and hollow at the top.

EGGS—One or two, elongate-ovate in shape, with thick shell, roughened with a white flakey substance, but bluish when this is scraped off.

Page [226](#).

VERDIN.—*Auriparus flaviceps*. Other name: "Yellow-headed Bush Tit."

RANGE—Northern regions of Mexico and contiguous portions of the United States, from southern Texas to Arizona and Lower California.

NEST—Globular, the outside being one mass of thorny twigs and stems interwoven, and lined with feathers.

EGGS—Three to six, of a bluish or greenish white color, speckled with reddish brown.

Page [230](#).

BRONZED GRACKLE.—*Quiscalus quiscula æneus*.

RANGE—Eastern North America from the Alleghenies and New England north to Hudson Bay, west to the Rocky Mountains.

NEST—In sycamore trees and oak woodlands a coarse bulky structure of grasses, knotty roots, mixed with mud, lined with horse hair or wool.

EGGS—Four to six, of a light greenish or smoky-blue, with lines, dots, blotches and scrawls on the surface.

Page 233.

RING-NECKED PHEASANT.—*Phasianus torquatus*.

RANGE—Throughout China; have been introduced into England and the United States.

NEST—On the ground under bushes.

EGGS—Vary, from thirteen to twenty.

Page 238.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT.—*Icteria virens*.

RANGE—Eastern United States to the Great Plains, north to Ontario and southern New England; south in winter through eastern Mexico to Northern Central America.

NEST—In briar thickets from two to five feet up, of withered leaves, dry grasses, strips of bark, lined with finer grasses.

EGGS—Three or four, white, with a glossy surface.

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