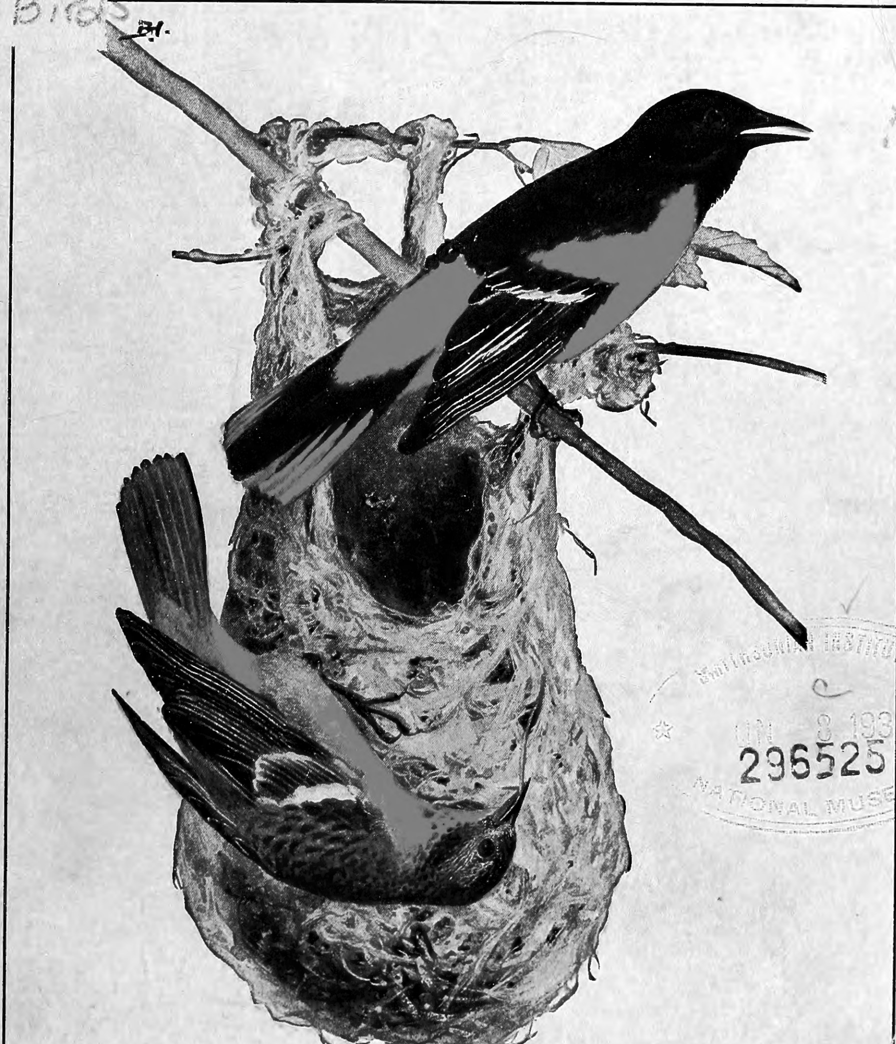
THE ORIOLE



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Official Organ of the

SOMERSET HILLS BIRD CLUB

BERNARDSVILLE, N. J.

The Oriole

VOL. II JUNE, 1914 NO. 1

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Birds

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD

(UPPER FIGURE, MALE; LOWER FIGURE, FEMALE)

Order—PASSERES
Genus—AGELAIUS

Family—ICTERIDÆ
Species—PHŒNICEUS

National Association of Audubon Societies

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OPPORTUNITIES OF BERNARDSVILLE

By William S. Post

From New Brunswick to Florida and west to Colorado I have found few places more favored for bird study than Bernardsville.

Here the Alleghanian and Carolinian avifaunae overlap. Here also we have dry uplands, rocky wooded hills and streams, and great open swamp lands close at hand. Within two or three miles at most are to be found the Crested Titmouse, Acadian Flycatcher, Worm-eating Warbler, and more rarely but regularly Henslow Sparrow. Louisiana Water-thrushes abound along our streams, a pair or two near the head waters of each, while the lisping drawn out z-e-e of the Blue-winged Warbler can be heard around the edge of almost all our old neglected fields and thickets. These represent the Carolinian fauna, yet the general list is of the Alleghanian.

One day in May, within a space of 100 yards, I found a pair of Carolina Wrens and a Saw-whet Owl. This was a case where extremes met; both were far out of their usual range, particularly the Owl, which seldom nests further south than the Adirondack mountains.

Our upland, hill and woodland birds are well known to all "Oriole" readers, but if you have never in early June waded out into the "cut off" of the Great Swamp below Basking Ridge, it is well worth while to do so. Here all changes! Before you leave the road, a Red-headed Woodpecker may flash by, the sight of whose matchless coloring will surely arouse the enthusiasm of the bird lover. Across the field comes the true clear note of the Crested Titmouse. You may whistle back, for it is easy to imitate, and he will answer, and soon will come nearer, and you can with reasonable care approach close enough to see him unconcernedly at work perhaps picking at something held between his feet in the same manner as does the Jay. The fields about resound with the song of the Bobolink, that most buoyant and joyous of all bird sounds, and with it also comes the plaintive whistle of the Meadow Lark.

The open swamp beyond is a new country. In it all sounds are strange. Chief among them, beside the constant scolding of the Red-winged Blackbird overhead, is the tinkle of the Swamp Sparrow, like the singing of the Junco, but more liquid and not quite so thin and bell-like, and ever mixed with it is the jolly little gurgle of the Marsh Wren. Is it association merely, or is there something in it that recalls the salt marshes of the seashore. With this sound all around as in the "cut off" I can never quite believe that I am still inland. The round ball like nests of the Wren are conspicuous in the clumps of rose bushes on all sides, but do not be fooled, these are only decoys, the true nests are well hidden in the long swamp grass and generally are green in color.

You will surely hear the tick-tick of a Rail, or its peeping like that of a young Turkey, which latter generally indicates that the nest is in a bog close by. Should you find it, with its ten or a dozen beautiful eggs, the sight is recompense for a long day's work.

Bitterns, Green and Night Herons and young Black Ducks fly off, Red-shouldered Hawks scream over the woods beyond, between which and you is a line of high bushes and stunted oaks. In these if fortunate, you may find a Least Bittern's nest, that queer little-big bird that Audubon says can squeeze between two books placed one inch apart. In these bushes the Yellow Warbler is common, which strangely enough we almost never see in our highlands.

With half a mile of open marsh around, no buildings or cultivated lands in sight, and with these birds about, one can easily believe himself to be in an unexplored spot, and who among bird or nature lovers has not always the desire for this experience!

If you know this section well, try a day in the open country toward Somerville and west of it. Upland Plovers commonly bred here not along ago and some do yet. Their long drawn out rising and falling call is one of the most wonderful bird notes. The Killdeer is also found more commonly in the flat lands than in the hills, and the Henslow Sparrow is there. Also among the sluggish streams the Acadian Flycatcher is abundant. I have found three nests in as many hours, yet I do not think the species ever stays in our upland swamps. It is one of the most interesting and individual of birds. On the way home, if you live on Mine Mount, stop in the "Ravine" where the Worm-eating Warblers were a few years ago locally abundant, and doubtless some are there each year now. They nest on the steepest pitches of the hills on both sides of the Lake opposite and below. If you think you hear a Chipping Sparrow's song in the woods, investigate, for the Worm-eating Warbler's twitter is almost identical with it, though a little clearer and truer.

About Hopatcong in the north are other chances well worth a day's time. In places there is sufficient Usnea Moss for the Parula, and there are other birds that the great expanse of water attracts.

Besides all these, a local race of Great-horned Owls used to exist in our very midst and I have no doubt that some are still about. I have found three nests with eggs or young on Mine Mount, and one in the Ravine as well as two in the Great Swamp; but for them you must look in February as the eggs hatch out about March 1st. Broad-winged and Sparrow Hawks are regular summer residents, though they, like all the other Raptores, have decreased in numbers very greatly.

The above opportunities should not be neglected as conditions are changing—the breeding Hawks and Owls, Plover, Woodcock, Ducks and Grouse, are already reduced by guns and by the constant march of progress, and the Great Swamp may perhaps some day be drained as the spring-runs on Mine Mount have been. The thickets are being cleared, old fields reclaimed, orchards kept clear of dead-wood, fruit blossoms and consequently the insect food of orchard birds poisoned, and these changes have already caused a considerable difference in the relative abundance of the species. At present none, or very few at least, are entirely lost to us, but we should lose no time in recording the habits of those that are becoming rare, remembering that the same species may have quite different traits under other circumstances and in other places, and that therefor observations neglected now, may be opportunities forever lost.

A FEW FRIENDLY FOREIGNERS IN FEATHERS.

By Lilian Gillette Cook.

All of the world to whom it is possible, does at one time or another, as did the man in the old Ballad, when he went forth strange countries for to see, and the things that interest one at home widen to include the similar interests abroad.

Many a time I am asked about birds seen by travellers on the Pacific Slope in the Canadian Rockies, the southern states, through the British Islands and up and down the continent of Europe, while a few inquiries have come in regard to the feathered inhabitants of Africa and farthest India.

It has entertained me in travelling abroad to notice how some of the birds went travelling with me, so to speak. These, of course, were among those more common in different countries, and perhaps it would be nearer the facts to say that I travelled with the birds, as they were keeping to their usual ways, with which my general plans of travel coincided.

In England's west-country, in mid-June in the summer of 1913, birds were everywhere, and they are more frequently found in medium-sized towns in England, than with us perhaps. Many rare species were seen, together with common ones, but no Nightingale glorified an hour. It is said that they do not enter Devonshire and Cornwall and even were they found there, their singing for the season would end about the middle of June. In steaming past Land's

HOUSE WREN

Order—PASSERES Family—TROGLODYTIDÆ

Genus—TROGLODYTES Species—AEDON

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End and along the coast of Cornwall to Plymouth the ship was followed by crowds of Gulls, mostly the Herring and Great Black-backed.

Lovely Exeter, around its cathedral's close, and the parked streets and private gardens near, was vocal with bird songs. There the large Thrush, often called the Stormcock, which is so like our Thrasher in appearance and song, was always flinging his phrases afar, from some tree-top; while his smaller cousin, the Throstle or Song-thrush gave almost the same notes, less vehemently from some more secluded perch. Browning said of these Thrushes:

"Hear the wise Thrush repeat his song twice over,

"Lest you should think he never could re-capture,

"That first, fine, careless rapture."

And I had supposed that with Mr. Browning's great accuracy, this marked a difference between the song of our Thrasher and the European Song-thrush, but in listening to the foreign Thrushes I found them as varied in the number of their repetitions as in the Thrasher that repeats his phrases twice, thrice, or many times. These two birds have what we recognize as Thrush plumage, smooth brown above, and white or whitish below, more or less spotted with brown; but another bird classed with the Thrushes looks as little like them as does our Bluebird, which is included in our Thrush family. This other European Thrush is the Yellow-billed Blackbird, well called by someone a black Robin, for in size, manner and some call notes, especially the "Tut-a-tut-tut," which our Robin so often gives, the birds are almost identical. The Yellow-bill will stand head side-ways, downward watching or listening and then make a sudden dive for the worm exactly as the Robin does—but when it comes to real song, the notes of our Robin—charming as is its "Spring song" when heard on a March day—cannot compare with the full, deep, liquid notes the Blackbird can give at its best. I have heard the "best" of the Blackbird only once, when he was on a branch overhanging the narrow path around Rougemont Castle, Exeter, just above that wonderful downward sweep of the turf, studded with great trees, that was once the moat of a castle—so long ago that now giant cedars of Lebanon grow where water used to be.

In and out of the shrubbery along this same path, a bright-eyed Wren kept watch of me, as I of him. This little bird was a Wren like unto our Wrens, and I use the word for only such birds, little saucy brown bits of feathers and audacity—but in books on English birds a number of different kinds of birds are called "Wrens"—with which the rapid traveller need not, at first, concern himself.

Down near the cathedral the Great Titmouse lived and would have passed easily for our Chickadee to one who has not studied the difference. In song the Titmouse gives several rich finch-like notes as an introduction to his "dee-dee-dee" but he lacks the clear two-note whistle with which our bird makes the woods musical. His actions are the same—those of a tiny acrobat, and it gives one a homelike feeling to watch his performances—if one is well acquainted with the Chickadee. Chaffinches were here, too, and around the cathedral towers Swifts circled and chattered, contesting rights of ownership with the noisy Jackdaws.

At Tintagel, on the west coast, up on the barren austere cliffs overlooking the "Cornish" seat is a great modern hotel, utterly at variance with that land which is filled with legends of King Arthur, but very comfortable for a tired tourist. Across a deep chasm, on the jagged rock opposite are ruins, called those of King Arthur's Castle and in the great hall of the hotel is a "Round Table." Just below the hotel is a wild tangle of shrubs and vines and weeds and here was a veritable birds' paradise. Many species were seen there for the first and last time, such as the brilliant Stonechat in his livery of black and white and red; the Bullfinch, which we know as a cage bird, the little White-throat (not at all like our White-throated Sparrow and of a different family) and other small birds hardly to be found on a traveller's list. It was at Tintagel I heard the first Skylarks in England, as they sprang from the short grass, singing away into space. Chaffinches were there and everywhere; birds well known to many in America from some domesticated here, the Chaffinch being one of the most lovable of feathered creatures. In coaching between the high hedge-rows of Cornwall and Devonshire, brilliant in June with a rose-colored valerian blossom, Chaffinches trilled and sang above and around us, walking at times with their quaint mincing step along the road before us—gay little companions. Other companions by the way were the small dull yellow colored birds called the Yellowhammer. Their song is a very simple performance, but rather sweet and pleasing, if not so carelessly happy as that of the Chaffinch.

A queer black and white bird about seven and a half inches long, with, seemingly much more than half the whole length in the tail, is the Wagtail. No bird could be more appropriately named, as the tail wags constantly and seems as if it would wag itself off. Up at the English Lakes I saw another Wagtail which was gray and white, and indeed I quite often met them later, and always near water. Swallows were common in a great many places, the one most often seen being like our Barn Swallow, but having a black breast. At Clovelly with many other birds seen before I found a tiny Blue-gray Titmouse; "Bleuthy" the country people call it, and a fascinating little person it is. All through England I found the Robin so different from ours, much smaller and with a breast more ruddy but *not red.*

When I was in Touraine, in France, I was very anxious to see what birds would be there and those that I found were Thrushes, Yellow-billed Blackbirds, the Great Titmouse, the Blue Titmouse, Swifts and Swallows;—just the same birds that had been common in England. Again in Switzerland, high up above the Lauterbrunnen valley, I thought I should surely have new birds; and there it was the Yellowbill and the Great Titmouse that lived in the hotel garden below my windows, coming every day to pick up crumbs dropped by people around the garden tables. One day a familiar note in the tree close to my windows made me look out, and the "ti-ti-ti" had come from just such a little bird as our Golden-crowned Kinglet, which there is called the "Goldcrest" or Golden-crested Wren.

Outside my windows in Florence, during the autumn, I heard a note so like our Robin's scolding I knew it must be the Yellow-bill, and there he was and there he stayed week after week with his friends and relations. There too was the Great Titmouse, and one day a flash of blue showed the little Titmouse.

I had hoped to see the European Goldfinches often, and I looked for them everywhere, listening in all possible places for their music, but the only Goldfinches I saw were some in a cage on the Ponte Vecchio in Florence, for sale! although their sale is forbidden by Italian law. Italy is very careless in regard to her feathered inhabitants and at present blocks the bird-protection of the world.

The last bird that I saw in Italy was in the Forum in Rome—on a day in mid-November and the bird was the tiny five-and-a-half-inch long "English" Robin, the "Pettirosso" (Redbreast) of Italy. In among the majestic ruins of that marvellous place the little creatures seemed even smaller than ever, but quite at his ease was he finding the same protection amid the historic stones which he had known, perhaps, beside some English cottage.

THE DESTRUCTION OF BIRD LIFE IN BERNARDSVILLE

By Meredith H. Pyne

There are more moments of danger than of peace in the life of a bird. From the time the egg is laid to the time of his death he is going through a series of narrow escapes. Though it may seem strange, the place in which most danger awaits him is our back gardens and near our houses. There he is exposed to the savage cat and the terrors of tree-climbing children.

It is up to us, therefore, to guard him as much as we are able. We should above all things build him a safe place in which to make his nest and bring up his young. The German Government, two years ago, realized this fact and they experimented to find out just what kind of a house he liked best. After two years' trial they came to the conclusion that the only kind the birds really liked was the "open box." The open box consists of a box open on three sides; the closed side is a slanting roof which forms the roof as well. This is put on a pole about six feet from the ground and is therefore safe from all cats, snakes and children.

We, who enjoy seeing the bright-colored birds and hearing their song, owe it to ourselves to save the lives of our feathered friends. Take Bernardsville itself, for example: ten years ago the country was swarming with birds of all sorts; to-day there are very few left. What is the cause? it is plain; ten years ago the country was fairly wild; to-day lofty mansions stand where there were nothing but woods. If then our bird life is being killed off like this, it is up to us to do all in our power to preserve them, and as the German government will tell you: "First of all build them a house."

WHY STUDY BIRDS?

Its Practical and Esthetic Value.

By John Dryden Kuser

Generalization is an easy way of accusation, vindication or explanation. Specific examples and careful and reasonable arguments are more difficult and therefore naturally more infrequent. Because of their rarity they are all the more treasured.

One of many cases where generalities are overabundant is in the attempts made to answer my titled question. So rare is an answer found which is of the slightest benefit to such persons as ask the question, that it is certainly to be considered worthy of note when one is discovered which in a clear, comprehensive way, actually explains to the inquirer why birds should be studied. Many times I have been asked the query by those who were not interested in birds; and in each case I knew by the words and looks of my questioner that my explanation in no way appealed to or convinced him. Nevertheless, although fully realizing the difficulty of treating the subject and realizing also my inability to do so successfully, yet I will try here to show a few reasons why *I* think we should study birds.

To me there appear two distinct classes into which the various values may be grouped: class one containing all practical values including economic and intellectual benefits; class two containing all esthetic values, chiefly derived through the channels of æsthetic pleasure and sport. I consider these classes to be equally valuable as regards the resulting benefits; though necessarily those coming from class one are more tangible and easily stated than those from class two.

CLASS ONE. To say that the avian forces of the world are the most valuable allies of the farmer, the fruit grower, the forester and all others whose occupation relates to any form of floral-growth, would, I think in this case, be merely a farce. Surely everyone who studies ornithology at all and many who know nothing about the science will admit this statement to be true. My reason for offering no proof is the sweeping and overwhelming abundance rather than the scarcity of it. It has been proven beyond a doubt that the vast majority of birds are beneficial, many to an incredible extent; but *some* species are harmful. You will immediately ask what these species are. In some cases we do not yet know and in others we are still slightly uncertain on account of the lack of trustworthy information. The direct cause is the scarcity of credible observers. Certainly this is one excuse for the existence of ornithological study, i. e., the determination of the value of each species—whether it is beneficial or harmful and to what degree.

This is not all the value of Class One, however. A nearly equally important factor is its intellectual benefit. As a study for the training of the mind, it should certainly stand high—all sciences should, because of the need for care required in their study. Then is this not another cause which makes it worthy of study?

CLASS TWO. One may not be able to recognize statistically the benefits from this class so easily, but nevertheless I believe them to be just as real and valuable. Were birds actually worthless economically yet their beauty in appearance and song would still warrant their protection. The æsthetic is certainly one of the greatest of esthetic realities. The study of ornithology has been said to destroy the student's appreciation of the subject of his study's beauty and charm. I do not deny this to be true in certain cases, but I am sure that this will not hold in the average case. And, moreover, unquestionably study of a species is needed for its adequate protection, so that it may increase and we may derive from the study, through the protection, a still greater amount of that beauty.

To attempt to show the value to the world of beauty in ornithology is practically impossible to such persons as have not themselves the appreciation for such beauty; and to those who are capable of æsthetic appreciation in birds, explanation is not what is needed —merely a chance for individual and original observation is required.

Then there is one more value to be derived from the study, through the resulting protection and that is the saving for a constant, but moderate use, the birds of the world for sport. Were we not to protect birds from an immoderate killing it would be only a matter of a few years before there would be no sport, because there would be no birds; and were we not to study birds, we would not be able, as I have shown, to afford them an adequate protection and preservation from extinction.

NESTING OF THE MERGANSER (Mergus Americanus) In 1913.

By William S. Post

The last place one would think a duck would choose for a nesting site would be a hole in a tree.

We have all read of the little Wood Ducks' preference for the hollow top of a large dead stub, or a hole in a tree not far from a river or lake, and we can with some effort extend the thought to include the Golden Eye or the little Buffalo Head, both small birds and quick on the wing without evoking an involuntary mental protest, but when we find the American Merganser, the largest of the Sheldrakes, in fact from its size sometimes called the Goosander, selecting a Pileated Woodpecker's hole forty or fifty feet high in the broken off dead limb of a live elm, it must be acknowledged that it is a strange choice of a place in which to hatch a brood of ten or a dozen hungry and energetic young ducklings, fully equipped at the start with powers and knowledge of how to swim and dive even in the most rapid water, but totally without wing feathers or means of getting to the water from this lofty home.

The entrance to the hole itself seems far smaller than the feathered body of the Merganser and the old duck must dive into it in full flight; but while this adds to the inconvenience to her, it is second in importance to the problem presented after the young are hatched, which I have twice seen solved in a most unexpected way.

The Merganser does not always select such a site, for undoubtedly it is as easily satisfied as the other ducks above mentioned, as well as its cousin the Hooded Merganser (a much smaller bird) and is equally pleaced with an entirely open hollow in a tree stub some ten feet high or less. Audubon in fact states that he had found several nests on the ground and not one in a tree.

Perhaps the tree building habit was first formed through the selection of the top of a very low stub. Two Black Duck nests which I have found were placed on hammocks or small elevations in swamps, one of which was undoubtedly the remains of an old stump, and Mergansers nests when on the ground are probably similarly situated. From this the next step would be for the duck to make use of the open top of a low stub perhaps three feet high, and after this a higher one, until gradually the selection might include a closed in hole at a considerable elevation.

It was my good fortune to witness twice the emerging of a young brood of Mergansers from an extreme situation of this kind, an old Pileated Woodpecker's hole about forty feet high in the limb of a live elm, standing about fifteen feet from the edge of the Tobique River in New Brunswick.

On June 18th, 1910, I fished the famous salmon pool at the fork of the river, and having incidentally run the canoe close to the shore near where this old elm stands, I landed and rapped several times sharply on the tree with a stick, for I had been told that a wood duck—which on the Tobique means a Golden Eye—nested there the previous Spring. The female

Merganser immediately flew out and having circled about over the river, alighted on the water. After assuring myself of the identification, which caused me some astonishment on account of the size of the bird in proportion to the entrance of the hole, I returned to my fishing.

In a few moments I noticed a small bird drop down apparently from the hole, and in a few more seconds, another and then a third. My first thought was that a Bank Swallow, of which there are many on the river, had flown up near to the hole and down again three times in succession. This caused me to stop fishing and to watch, when to my astonishment, a small bird with white breast appeared in the hole, jumped out, and was followed by another, and again another. I then lost no time in reaching a point in the river opposite the tree, where I saw in the water against the bank, swimming around, a brood of eleven young ducks. I was much surprised, as I had been under the impression from what I had read, that the old duck would certainly carry down the young from such an inaccessible position, and though I believe the young birds must have landed in the water, I was yet astonished that they could withstand the shock of such a drop, and I presumed that by rapping on the tree I had caused the old bird to leave in such fright that her fear had been communicated to the young and they had followed her example, and that the whole procedure was therefore an unnatural one.

The Club House is situated directly across the river, and on June 12th, 1913, two years later, I was sitting on the piazza when my attention was attracted by seeing something large drop from the top of this same elm into the water. I immediately saw that it was the old Sheldrake and that she was swimming around close to the shore.

In a few seconds another dropped from the hole to the ground and I could see it run down the bank and join its Mother who was calling loudly and turning round and round in the water. This one was quickly followed by others in succession until there were seven. By this time I had called my guide and in company of one of the members of the Club was crossing the river, provided with trout landing nets.

The old bird seeing us immediately swam up stream around the point with her brood and this was the last we saw of her. We landed and stood under the tree where we could hear distinctly more young ducks peeping in the hole. Looking up we saw one tottering on the edge, and before we could take stations where we could properly observe the actual drop he had struck the ground close to my friend and made such rapid progress toward the water that he escaped in spite of landing nets. In a few seconds another, which proved to be the last, followed, falling on the other side of the tree, and I promptly made him captive. The first bird was in the water and had immediately dived.

It is strange that he should have known enough to seek the water, and also to dive immediately.

He could only have known which way the water was by looking before he fell to the ground, for once on the grassy bank it would seem impossible that he could have seen which way to go, and he had no mother to guide him by her calls as the others did, she having some minutes before gone out of sight and hearing. The water of the river is exceedingly swift, yet his swimming and diving was so strong and so expert that in spite of the efforts of two men with pole and paddle he leads us a chase of several hundred yards before I finally secured him with the landing net.

Their great strength and vitality encouraged me to think that I could rear them and add them to those captive ducks which are being maintained by one of the friends of our birds, in the hopes of thus learning how to propagate them in confinement and save the species from possible ultimate extinction.

The two young birds appeared to have quite different individual characters; one was tame but the other savagely bit at me each time I tried to touch him or offer him food. Both refused entirely to eat, until finally on the second day I placed small particles of trout meat in the bottom of a large can of water. This after an hour I found had disappeared and the moist condition of the birds' breasts told the story that they had swam in the can and picked the food from the bottom. The next morning, alas! both were dead, lying on their backs, indicating that they had not died peacefully but with a struggle, and I fear that the fresh fish was too strong a diet for them.

It might be thought that the shock of the fall from the tree contributed to cause their death were it not that the old bird and her brood were observed several days later in the mouth of one of the back waters of the river, locally called Bogans; and also that the brood of 1910 was observed by me for four days, and it is my opinion now that they also fell on the ground and not into the water.

There are a few bushes under the tree, but in general the ground is covered with grass which is kept fairly close by cattle, and is very similar in character to that of any ordinary grazed meadow. The first bird that fell while we were under the tree struck fairly on the smooth ground and the fall of the other was partly broken by one of the bushes. I think it quite certain that they had received no food up to this time, for I had been at the Club House directly across the river for a week and had not before seen the old bird and if she had been feeding the young her doing so could not have escaped my attention.

Nuttall wrote of his chasing and capturing in 1832 a young bird of this species on the Susquehanna River not larger than a goose egg, which he described as generally gray with a rufus head and neck and the rudiments of a growing crest. This description was quoted by Audubon, and later by Baird, Brewer & Ridgway, yet it hardly agrees with the two I captured. These were greyish black on the back and white below. The little wings showed the white patch of the species and there was a spot of white in the dark color of each side of the body above the legs. The head showed the rufus distinctly only around the sides of the neck, and it was not clearly defined as to outline. The grey of the back extended over the top of the head but was there slightly more brownish and I could observe no indication of a crest.

INTENSIVE FIELD OBSERVATION.

By C. William Beebe

Two questions were recently put to me, neither of which I could answer. Nor could several well-known fellow ornithologists to whom I propounded the same queries. Does the male Song Sparrow assist in incubation? Does the female Wood Thrush ever sing? The answers to these and to hundreds of other problems relating to our commonest birds would be real contributions to science, of as much value as the discovery of an entirely new species, or the more or less complete list of birds of any one locality.

The time is near at hand when the most significant contributions to ornithology must come from careful observation in the field. The majority of the more recent books completely sustain this assertion. Two have recently appeared which deal respectively with the Infancy and the Courtship of animals and another is concerned wholly with the intensely interesting life of the Antarctic Penguins. For further verification one may consult Theodore Roosevelt's newly published volumes on the "Life Histories of African Game Animals," especially the chapter on coloration, while his article dealing with his South American trip in the May Scribner's is replete with similar sentiments.

We are all too apt to think that worthy scientific discoveries can be made only in the wilderness or in foreign countries, whereas the history of our common-

BOB-WHITE

Order—GALLINÆ | Family—ODONTOPHORIDÆ
Genus—COLINUS | Species—VIRGINIANUS

National Association of Audubon Societies

est bird has not yet half been recorded. Mr. H. Eliot Howard has recently completed a work on the British Warblers which contains a multitude of remarkable new facts and shows that the life of the most sombre bird is full of absorbing interest.

Wherever one travels one finds the same state of affairs. In India the Tailor-bird is the commonest inmate of the compounds about the bungalows. Its wonderful nest, held between two leaves neatly stitched together, is one of the marvels of avian architecture and may readily be found in low bushes. Yet no man has ever seen one of these little birds at work; we have no knowledge of the method of sewing, of the way the fibre thread is passed in and out of the regular rows of holes.

In gathering information in the Orient concerning the lives of Pheasants I found that I must put definite questions to people in order to elicit information of value, and a set of inquiries became imperative. With the help of a similar set formulated long ago by Mr. Ernest Thompson Seton, I drew up the following, which I reproduce here because I feel sure that they will be of suggestive value in any attempt to work out the life history of our more common American birds.

QUESTIONS

Concerning the Natural History of the—————

1. HABITAT: Is it found in dry uplands, dense woods, open grass lands, marshes, or near water?
   What reason is there for its choice of locality?
2. VOICE OF MALE: What are its call notes, song, alarm notes, and variations of the same?
   Are they given on the ground or in trees?
   Time of day; time of year?
3. VOICE OF FEMALE: As above.
4. VOICE OF YOUNG: As above.
5. CARE OF YOUNG: What devices do the parents use to protect the young?
6. HABITS: Does the male fight?
   Time of day; time of year?
   When does it feed?
   Where is the heat of the day spent?
   Describe its flight?
7. SIGNALS: What sounds other than vocal are made?
   Time of day and of year?
   Before or after singing?
8. SENSES: Does it rely on its eyes or ears?
9. SUCCESS IN LIFE: Effect of the increase of civilization on the species?
   Does it adapt itself to deforestation?
   Is the species decreasing and why?
10. ROOSTS: Where does it roost; singly, in pairs, in a family or several birds together?
11. FOOD: Does it feed only on the ground and how?
    Does the food change with time of life or time of year?
    Is it fattened or affected in other noticeable ways by any food?

12. PLUMAGE: Is the colour affected by altitude or by atmospheric conditions?
When does it molt?
Do any special feathers replace the Summer plumage of the male?
When is the adult plumage acquired?

13. MATING: Describe the courtship?
Is it monogamous or polygamous?
Is it found in pairs throughout the year?

14. NESTING: Data as to materials and position of nest?

15. EGGS: Number of egss laid; time of year; variation in size and colour?

16. BROODS: Number each season and time of year of each?
Average number of chicks seen with parents?
How long do the chicks of the first brood remain with the parents?

17. YOUNG: Data as to habits; plumage, food?

18. COMPETITORS: With what other birds does it have to compete for food?

19. ENEMIES: What animals, birds, reptiles or insects cause its death?
How are these avoided or combated?

20. FRIENDS: Does it ever associate in a friendly way with wild animals or birds, domestic creatures or mankind?

21. DISEASE: To what diseases is it subject?
Does it bathe or in any other way attempt to get rid of parasites?

22. MIGRATION: Is there any season or annual migration, and for what reason?

23. PROTECTION: Is it protected by law at any season?

24. CAPTURE: What months is it shot and by what methods?

25. USES: To what use is it put as regards flesh, feathers, etc.?

26. LEGENDS: Are there any legends or superstitions about it?

27. NAMES: What are the local names for the species?
What is their etymology or evident application?

28. CAPTIVITY: Data in regard to birds in captivity; length of life, breeding, etc.?

29. HYBRIDIZING: Data regarding crossing with other birds?

THE NEW JERSEY AUDUBON SOCIETY.

By Beecher S. Bowdish, Secretary

To the Somerset Hills Bird Club the New Jersey Audubon Society sends greetings. We rejoice in the formation and prosperity of all such organizations, because they contribute materially to the encouragement of the study of bird life and a more general appreciation of the economic and esthetic value of birds.

The Audubon Society was organized and incorporated in December, 1911, to take the place of the Audubon Society of the State of New Jersey and to vigorously prosecute the work of bird protection and encouragement throughout the State. It now has a total membership of more than twenty thousand, of which more than one thousand are adult members.

The key-note of the Society's work is education. We cannot believe that the destruction of such a valuable natural asset of the State as its bird life can have its explanation in anything but ignorance. Quite recently an Italian near Atlantic City who had shot a song sparrow and purple finch as "game," murderously assaulted the warden who attempted his arrest. This was but one example of the killing of thousands of song and insectivorous birds which takes place throughout the State every year, because thousands of foreigners who pour into the port of New York and settle in the neighboring State of New Jersey have been accustomed to regard birds as of value only to the gunner and taught to believe that in this country they will have far greater freedom to pursue their amusement than they had at home. And foreigners are not alone in such killing of birds. Many of our American men and boys go out with guns and the conviction that anything that flies is legitimate game.

Through our published and widely circulated literature, by our Junior Audubon Classes in the schools, by means of articles in the press and lectures in schools, granges and public halls, we seek to spread widely among the people of the State the knowledge of the necessity of conserving our valuable birds. Necessary, protective laws are advocated; vicious measures are vigorously opposed.

By means of our permanent educational exhibit of the economic value of birds at Atlantic City, we have placed before the eyes of thousands of visitors from every part of the globe, every year, an object lesson unique, so far as we are aware, in the history of bird protective organizations throughout the world.

The field that this Society is endeavoring to work is wide and important, beyond the belief of those who have not given the matter careful study. At the present time it is limited only by the moral and financial support that we receive. Depending on the influence wielded by an adult membership of little more than a thousand and on financial resources provided by the membership dues of an even smaller number, we are handicapped in a work that should command the unstinted support of the whole people of the State. In a State as rich and intellectual as New Jersey such an organization as ours should have an active membership of at least ten thousand. It should be generously endowed.

We invite investigation of this subject on the part of the readers of the Oriole. We shall be glad to send our Annual Report, Bulletins and other matter to anyone requesting same. Every dollar membership helps the cause by so much.

We feel confident that the time will come when some wealthy and philanthropic individual will put an endowment fund at the disposal of the Society, the income from which will make possible the realization of achievements far in advance of those which we have yet attained. We only hope that such a happy consummation may come in time to save some of our vanishing species and to contribute to the happiness and welfare of the present generation.

EDITORIAL.

Bird-protectionists are not such severe and prohibiting characters as they may seem to their adversaries. We wish to allow all the privileges we can to the Sportsmen, the Milliners, the Oologists and those who kill birds in the name of science. We are not against their business; we are not against their conducting that business. Only—birds and their preservation come first to us.

All we wish to succeed in is the modification of such business to a basis where it does not become an actual total destructive bird force; i. e., where the destruction so caused is not more than the increase beyond a fair average—an average which is beneficial to the species itself; where the result is not destructive. Of course singly, they cannot be considered, but as a whole, the whole amount caused by the destructive forces versus the natural or naturally caused increase. Where the increase beyond the standard which I have spoken of is less than the total destruction, as is the case with regard to most species at the present time; then the destructive force which is greatest and yet also least useful in other ways—this force should be reduced, at least temporarily.

This is not a question which can be settled and adjusted once and for all time. It is a matter requiring careful attention, careful consideration and a carefully drawn conclusion and basis for control. *Modification, not abolition, is what we are fighting for.* No one cause is to blame for the present lamentable rarity of wild-life; but together the result of the various destructive forces is appaling.

The Somerset Hills Bird Club is greatly indebted to the National Association of Audubon Societies, through the General Secretary, Mr. T. Gilbert Pearson, for the use of the colored plates of the Oriole (cover), the Red-winged Blackbird, the House Wren and the Bob White.

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

CONSTITUTION.

Article I. *Name.*

The name of this organization shall be the "Somerset Hills Bird Club."

Article II. *Objects.*

The objects of this club shall be: To protect and study birds, and to increase the interest thereof chiefly in the Somerset Hills.

Article III. *Amendments.*

Amendments to this constitution may be made by a two-thirds vote of the members present at any regular or called meeting of the society, provided a notice of such change shall be mailed to all active members five days prior to date of said meeting.

BY-LAWS.

Article I. *Membership.*

There shall be four classes of members, who shall be known as: Patrons, Life Members, Associate Members and Active Members.

Any person may become a Patron upon payment of twenty-five dollars at one time.

Any person may become a Life Member upon payment of ten dollars at one time.

Any person may become an Associate Member upon payment of one dollar and fifty cents annually.

Active Members shall pay one dollar and fifty cents annually and shall have all rights of membership except that of voting on new members of the club or any other of its affairs.

Failure to pay dues within four months after they become due shall cancel membership.

Article II. *Trustees.*

A Board of Trustees shall be elected from the Active Members consisting of ten members to have full power of all the affairs of the club, elect its members, officers, have the right to increase the membership of their own body, etc.

Article III. *Officers.*

The officers of the club shall consist of a President, two Vice-Presidents (a boy and a girl), a Secretary and a Treasurer, who shall be elected by a majority vote of the Trustees. Their term of office shall be one year.

Honorary Vice-Presidents not to exceed ten in number may be elected.

The President shall preside at all the meetings of the club, shall execute all agreements of every nature and shall perform all the usual duties incidental to the office of President.

The Vice-Presidents shall act in the place of the President in his absence.

The Treasurer shall receive all dues and fees and shall have the custody of all moneys and books of account belonging to the club and shall make a full financial statement of the affairs of the club at the meetings.

The Secretary shall keep a record of all meetings and proceedings of the club; shall conduct the correspondence of the club, shall give legal notice of all meetings and shall perform such other duties as belong to the office.

Article IV. *New Members.*

New Active Members may be elected by a majority vote of the Trustees at any regular or called meting.

Article V.

Quorum for business at a meeting of the Trustees shall be five.

The Board of Trustees may appoint committees to report on desired subjects.

Lectures shall be given as often as is determined by the Trustees.

Article VI. *Meetings.*

The regular meetings of the Society shall be held during the last week of June, July, August and September.

Notice of such meetings must be sent to each member five days in advance of the date of said meeting. Special meetings may be called upon a day's notice by the President, or upon request of any five Trustees.

Article VII.

After the regular order of business at a meeting, viz; roll-call, reading minutes of last meeting, election of new members, and miscellaneous business shall come "Items of Interest," when each member shall be requested by the President for a few moments talk.

Article VIII.

The club shall publish a paper, entitled "The Oriole," on the first of June and August. It shall be sent free to Patrons, Life, Associate and Active Members and Honorary Vice-Presidents. The Editor of this paper shall be elected at the same time and in the same manner as the officers of the club. The Editor has the privilege of appointing two Associate Editors.

No Active Members may hold more than one office at the same time except the editorship of "The Oriole."

Three copies of "The Oriole" shall be sent free to all those who have contributed articles to it.

Subscriber's dues to "The Oriole" are $1.50 per year.

Article IX. *Amendments.*

These By-Laws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of those present at any regular or called meeting of the club.

GIBBS & VAN VLECK, INC., N. Y.