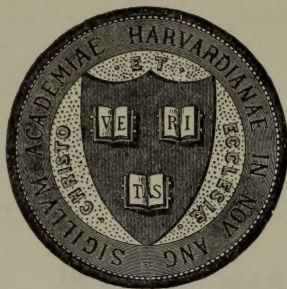


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1896

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NOTES ON THE
BIRDS OF HULL
MASSACHUSETTS,

BY

Everett W. Ricker.

NEWTONVILLE.

C. J. MAYNARD.

1896.

A

COLLECTION OF
E. A. & O. Bangs,
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ILLUSTRATED.

NEWTONVILLE.
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INTRODUCTION.

This list, for it is but little more than a list, I have made up of birds that have either been seen by myself or by my friend Mr. B. and his son, both of whom are well acquainted with our birds, while a very few have been reported to me by gunners. I have however, only given those in this list that I feel quite sure occur, as I know that it is very easy to make mistakes and the temptations are strong to make as large a list as possible.

My chances for observing birds have been rather limited, as I have had only some afternoons and Sundays, during the summer months, thus I have no doubt overlooked some species. Very few species raise their young here, and those nests which I have found, were mostly those of birds which breed on the ground, or occasionally in low bushes. Migrating species make a very brief stay, as, on account of the comparatively barren nature of the soil and scarcity of trees, there is but little to attract them here.

Hull, as every one knows, is a peninsular with five hills and stretches of level, sandy soil sparsely covered with rather coarse grass. There are very few trees, except those that grow near the hills. Point Allerton, it is said, was covered with trees in early times and a legend of the

place says that the early Norsemen landed there and had a battle with the Indians, during which one of their men was killed. The place was undoubtedly inhabited by Indians, as I have found Indian relics all over the hills.



CATALOGUE.

HOLBOELL'S GREBE.

COLYMBUS HOLBOELLII.

Occurs occasionally off the coast in winter and autumn.

LOON.

URINATOR IMBER.

This species has been seen here in winter and autumn.

BIRDS OF HULL.

7

HERRING GULL.

LARUS SMITHSONIANUS.

Great numbers of these are to be seen at the proper season.

COMMON TERN.

STERNA HIRUNDO.

This species is of very common occurrence here in summer.

ARCTIC TERN.

STERNA PARADISAEA.

Occasionally occurs in spring and summer.

GULL-BILLED TERN.

GELOHOLIDON NILOTICA.

Of rare occurrence in the autumnal migrations.

BIRDS OF HULL.

GANNET.

SULA BASSANA.

Occurs during spring and autumn migrations.

WILSON'S PETREL.

OCEANITES OCEANICUS.

Mr. B. and his son say that when fishing off the beacon at Point Allerton one day, the latter part of June 1894, they saw a flock of these birds, and that they were quite tame; when they threw overboard any pieces of fish, the Petrel darted after them quite eagerly.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER, SHELLDRAKE.

MERGUS SERRATOR.

I have been told by different gunners that these are here; knowing how common they are

I do not doubt that they occur every year in spring, autumn, and winter.

MALLARD DUCK.

ANAS BOSCHAS.

I have not seen these birds myself, but my friend, Mr. B, says that they are occasionally found in autumn.

BLACK DUCK, DUSKY DUCK.

ANAS OBSCURA.

Of common occurrence in spring and autumn.

AMERICAN GOLDEN EYE DUCK, WHISTLER.

GLAUCIONETTA AMERICANA.

Of undoubted occurrence as a winter visitor.

BIRDS OF HULL.

BUFFLEHEAD, BUTTERBALL.

CHARITONETTA ALBEOLA..

September 17, 1893, I saw a duck a little way from the shore at Bayside, that I think without doubt was a Bufflehead. These ducks have also been reported to me by gunners.

OLD SQUAW, LONG TAILED DUCK.

CLANGULA HYEMALIS.

Reported as occurring in winter.

EIDER DUCK.

SOMATERIA DRESSERI.

Reported here in winter.

AMERICAN SCOTER.

OIDEZIA AMERICANA.

Common in spring, autumn and winter.

BIRDS OF HULL.

11

WHITE-WINGED COOT.

OIDEMIA DEGLANDI.

I saw one that had been shot near Bay-side.

SURF DUCK, SKUNK HEAD COOT.

OIDEMIA PERSPICILLATA.

Reported as occurring in spring, autumn and winter.

RUDDY DUCK.

ERISMATURA RUBIDA.

Occasionally occurs during the spring and autumnal migrations.

CANADA GOOSE.

BRANTA CANADENSIS.

I saw a small flock early in the spring of 1895.

BIRDS OF HULL.

AMERICAN BITTERN.

BOTAURUS LENTIGINOSUS.

Has been seen at Shagrocks, the outermost of the Brewsters, one of the wildest places in Massachusetts.

GREAT BLUE HERON.

ARDEA HERODIAS.

One was seen on Bunkin Island, Sept. 20, 1894.

NIGHT HERON.

NYCTICORAX NAEVIUS.

One was seen by my friend Mr. B, near the Beacon at Pt. Allerton.

KNOT.

TRINGA CANUTUS.

I procured one specimen that was shot on the plains or marshes near Strawberry Hill.

PECTORAL SANDPIPER.

TRINGA MACULATA.

Of common occurrence in autumn.

LEAST SANDPIPER.

TRINGA MINUTILLA.

I saw two of these neat little birds, May 28, 1893, on the outer beach ; they were quite tame and gave me a good chance to watch them as they ran back and forth on the wet sand, also occurs in abundance in autumn.

SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER.

EREUNETES PUSILLUS.

The birds arrive here every spring and fall in large flocks, in spite of having been shot at all along the coast.

BIRDS OF HULL.

SANDERLING.

CALIDRIS ARENARIA.

These birds are common in autumn.

MARBLED GODWIT.

LIMOSA FEDOA.

One of these was seen at the foot of Point Allerton by my friend, Mr. B.

HUDSONIAN GODWIT.

LIMOSA HAEMASTICA.

This bird has been reported as occurring, by a friend, who is one of the best posted sportsmen in Hull.

YELLOW LEGS.

TOTANUS FLAVIPES.

Very common in late summer and autumn. If one goes out gunning when these birds are

about, the chatter and noise which they make as they fly off when approached, and nine times out of ten they see the sportsman before he sees them, and so rise unexpectedly, causes one to think that the birds are egotistical enough to imagine that they are the only game about, and that they are the sole object of the sportsman's desires.

ESKIMO CURLEW.

NUMENIUS BOREALIS.

My friend, Mr. N. reports having seen three near Strawberry Hill.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW.

NUMENIUS LONGIROSTRIS.

Have been seen here, rarely, during the migrations.

BIRDS OF HULL.

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER.

CHARADRIUS SQUATAROLA.

This species has been seen here by myself and others.

GOLDEN PLOVER.

CHARADRIUS DOMINICUS.

This species also occurs in autumn.

SEMIPALMATE PLOVER.

AEGIALITIS SEMIPALMATA.

These little birds are very common. Sept. 17, 1893, I saw one that had evidently been wounded and left behind.

PIPING PLOVER.

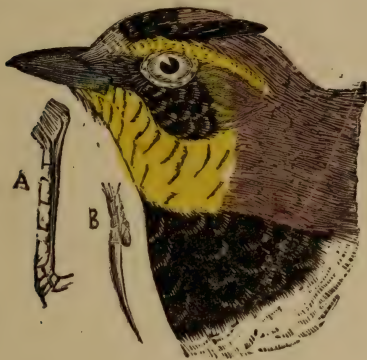
AEGIALITIS MELODA.

This species is found during the migrations and probably once bred here.

TURNSTONE.

ARENARIA INTERPRES.

A few of these fine birds are to be seen here during the migrations. I shot one on the Shagrocks, Labor day, 1895. (For an account of Shagrocks, see last pages.)



Head of Horned Lark.

QUAIL

COLINUS VIRGINIANUS.

These birds have been heard calling in the meadows.

MARSH HAWK.

CIRCUS HUDSONIUS.

I had a fine specimen of a young male brought me; it had been shot near Strawberry Hill.

SHARP SHINNED HAWK.

ACCIPITER FUSCUS.

I saw, for a few moments one day, what I have every reason to believe was one of these hawks.

BELTED KINGFISHER.

CERYLE ALCYON.

I saw a single specimen in Sept., 1895.

DOWNY WOODPECKER.

DROBATES PUBESCENS.

These little woodpeckers are found here during the migrations.

YELLOW-BELLIED WOODPECKER.

SPHRYAPICUS VARIUS.

I have the skin of one that was shot in Hull by Mr. W. Richardson.

YELLOW SHAFTED FLICKER.

COLAPTES AURATUS.

I have seen several of these birds. Our cat caught a young one, but it was promptly taken from her and flew off apparently all right. I have no doubt that they breed here, on or near Point Allerton.

NIGHT HAWK.

CHORDEILES VIRGINIANUS.

I have seen a few flying around in the evenings, never more than two or three at a time. Climbing Telegraph Hill, one Sunday with my friend Philip, I nearly stepped on one and only saw him as he rose from nearly under my feet on the grass at the foot of an old fence. As an item of historical interest, it may be mentioned that there is an old well on the top of this hill which, according to tradition, Laffayette dug or planned.



Head of Bank Swallow.

CHIMNEY SWIFT.

CHAETURA PELAGICA.

One seen June 4, 1893, from the top of Point Allerton.

RUBY-THOATED HUMMINGBIRD

TROCHILUS COLUBRIS.

A few are seen every summer.

KING BIRD.

TYRANNUS TYRANNUS.

These birds occur, and I think they breed here. To me they are one of our most interesting birds, the quick, fearless way they will attack other, often larger birds, and drive them off, especially those that they think are after their eggs, and I believe they make very few mistakes in this respect, is admirable.

HORNED LARK.

OTOCORIS ALPESTRIS.

Mr. Austin Clark informs me that he procured a specimen of this species at Hull, in December, 1895, and saw others.

CROW.

CORVUS AMERICANUS.

A few are to be seen at all parts of the year

COWBIRD.

MOLOTHRUS ATER.

A few small flocks have been seen here lately tagging at the heels of the cattle in the pastures.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD.

AGELAIUS PHOENICEUS.

A number build here in the bushes in the swamps

The males are a handsome bird with their red-shoulder straps showing off well against their jetty, black plumage.

MEADOW LARK.

STURNELLA MAGNA.

These larks are very common on the meadows on both sides of Strawberry Hill, in fact several may be heard singing at once while flying around, but they seem as shy as elsewhere in New England.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE.

ICTERUS GALBULA.

A few pairs build here every summer.

BOBOLINK.

DOLICHONYX ORYZIVORUS.

July 19, 1892, while I was walking up Strawberry Hill with a friend, we saw a pair of Bobolinks ; the male was very tame and we approached within ten or twelve feet of him ; while on the ground, he would sing very little, he seemed to be talking or chattering to us, as if he were trying to draw our attention to himself, then as we came nearer he would take to wing and give out those beautiful flute-like notes for which these birds are famous, and that once heard will never be forgotten. There is a certain wildness and richness to their song, that appeals very forcibly to all bird lovers. I do not know of any of our birds that we greet with greater pleasure in spring, than the bobolink.

The female was shyer than her gayer and braver mate.

BRONZED GRACKLE.

QUISCALUS QUISCULA AENEUS.

I have seen a few on Point Allerton.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH.

SPINUS TRISTIS.

Great quantities frequent the roadsides, and fields, as soon as the chiccory and other wild plants have gone to seed ; it is a pleasure to watch them on the wing as they fly with a pretty undulating motion while at every rise the sharp, clear notes seem to be thrown out.

BIRDS OF HULL.

SNOW BUNTING.

PLECTROPHENAX NIVALIS.

These birds are common in winter and feed on the seeds of wild plants which grow around Point Allerton.

SHARP-TAILED SPARROW.

AMMODRAMUS CAUDICUTUS.

I am quite certain I have seen these little birds running along the beach above high water mark, but not having my gun, could not positively identify them.

ENGLISH SPARROW.

PASSER DOMESTICUS.

When we first went down to Hull, about eight years ago, these little pests were not com-

mon, but they have greatly increased in numbers as they have nearly everywhere during the last few years.

GRASS FINCH.

POOCAETES GRAMINEUS.

This is a very common species. On May 29, 1893, I saw a nest with four eggs; the female seemed quite tame. May 31, the young birds were out of the shell. June 2, there was very little down on the young grass finches. One seemed livelier than the rest, and would open its mouth, but the others quivered or shook all the time. June 6, the little finches were beginning to have some pin feathers, especially the larger wing quills. The feathers are better developed between the shoulders.

BIRDS OF HULL.

CHIPPING SPARROW.

SPIZELLA DOMESTICUS.

These bright, neat, and trim little birds are very common.

BLACK SNOWBIRD.

JUNCO HYEMALIS.

These demure and quaker-like little birds are found during their migrations and it is a pleasure to watch them as they flit quickly from bush to bush.

SAVANNAH SPARROW.

AMMODRAMUS SANDWICHENSIS.

These sparrows are quite numerous, in fact they build here. I have found their nest on Point Allerton when in company with my friend R. W. S.

IPSWICH SPARROW.

AMMODRAMUS PRINCEPS.

This interesting sparrow has been taken in Hull in autumn, by Mr. Foster H. Brackett, to whom I am also indebted for notes upon the occurrence of the three following species.

TREE SPARROW.

SPIZELLA MONTICOLA.

Occurs as a common winter and autumn visitor.

REDPOLL.

ACANTHIS LINARIA.

Common during the winters in which it visits Eastern Massachusetts.

GREATER REDPOLL.

ACANTHIS ROSTRATA.

Occurs occasionally with the common Redpoll.

BIRDS OF HULL.

SONG SPARROW.

MELOSPIZA FASCIATA.

These gay and lively little songsters are abundant. What would a New England spring be without them, and with what joy we first hear their bright, clear notes ringing out across the fields ; no matter how cold it seemed the moment before, the air appears to grow warmer and clearer, while life becomes brighter ; then we go home feeling as if spring had truly come with us.

TREE SWALLOW.

TACHYCINETA BICOLOR.

These swallows come to Hull in great numbers during the fall migrations, whirling round

and round like great handfulls of dried leaves, then settle on the telegraph wires to rest, but after a moment they are off again.

BANK SWALLOW.

CLIVICOLA RIPARIA.

These quaker-like little birds have built in the bank on top of Point Allerton. It is an interesting sight on a summer afternoon to watch them sailing around and darting in and out of their houses, but in spite of the speed with which they enter, they never make a mistake and go into the hole occupied by some neighbor. I have spent many an afternoon, lying down in the sweet grass on top of the hill looking out to sea and watching these swallows going and coming.

BLACK POLLED WARBLER.

DENDROECA STRIATA.

May 27, 1893, at Bayside, I saw a male Black-poll flying around some poplars. He was on the move all the time. The same afternoon I saw a pair near Strawberry Hill, about half a mile from where I saw the first bird.

WHITE BELLIED NUTHATCH.

SITTA CAROLINENSIS.

This bird has been seen in autumn by my friend Mr. B.

CHICKADEE.

PARUS ATRICAPILLUS.

What a pleasure it is to come up to a flock of these bright, little acrobats as they twist and turn about the twigs, all the time merrily calling to one another. They are social little nites keeping close together and not seeming to mind if they are watched.

ROBIN.

MERULA MIGRATORIA.

When we came down here, June 4, 1892, we found that a pair of Robins had built their nest at the back of our cottage in the corner near the eaves. The young were hatched and the old birds were quite busy feeding them, they were fairly grown and soon left the nest.

I think the old birds displayed more than mere instinct in the choice of a place for their nest, as it was completely sheltered on three sides by the house, and on the fourth by a low barn.

APPENDIX.

BLACK-BACKED GULL.

LARUS MARINUS.

Mr. Austin Clark tells me that he saw a specimen in Hull, in December, 1895. It probably occurs on or near Shagrocks.

I shall always remember my first visit to these rough and shaggy rocks when with my friend Philip, I spent several hours exploring them. This was at low tide, during the latter

part of a bright and sunny afternoon. There were a number of beautiful little grottoes, festooned with various colored sea weeds, dripping with water, shining and sparkling wherever the sunlight touched them.

Above the high water mark, were the rough, shaggy rocks, looking beautiful in the sunlight of a fine September day, making it all like a scene from fairy land.

I saw a tin box on a ledge above me, and I could imagine it filled with some musty papers giving the last message from some ill-fated ship. I could not help thinking how these same grand castled rocks would look in a winter's storm with the waves dashing and surging against them; there would be little chance for the poor ship and her crew that were unfortunate enough to be wrecked on these sharp and cruel ledges.

EUROPEAN KESTREL.

FALCO TINNUNCULUS.

A female shot at Strawberry Hill, Nantasket Beach, Mass., Sept. 29, 1887, by Mr. F. H. Brackett. Cory, Auk, Vol. V, 1888, Page 110, 205.



Head of English Sparrow.

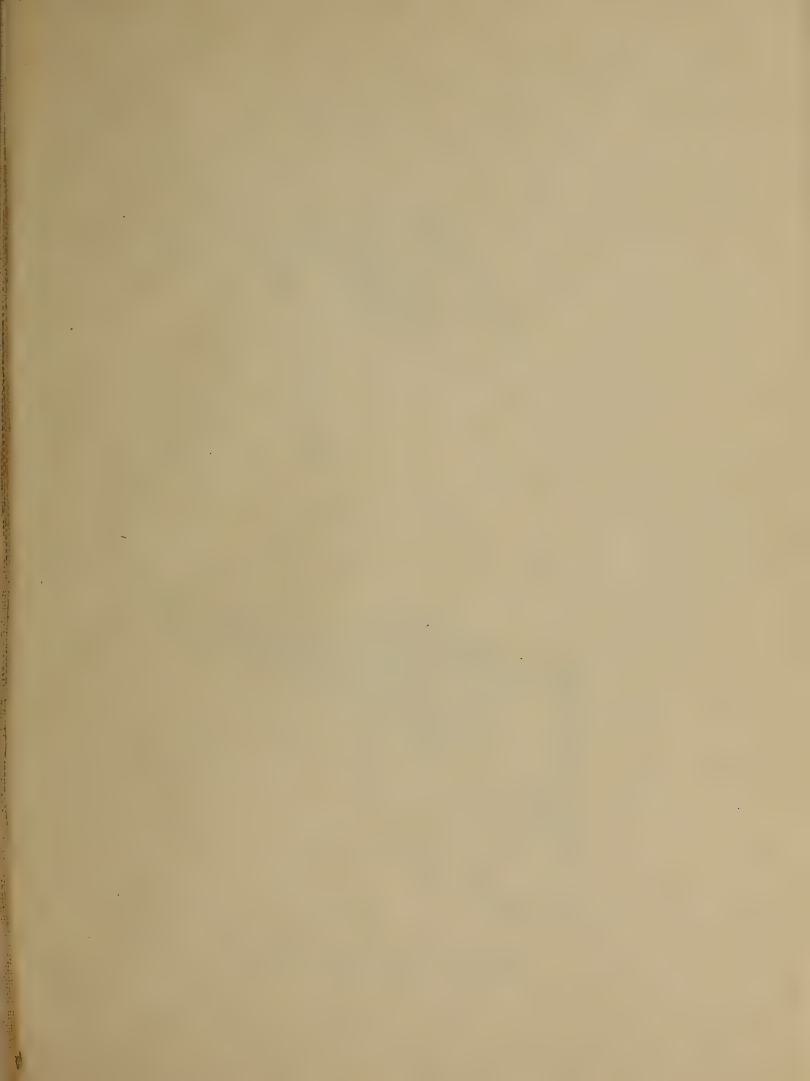


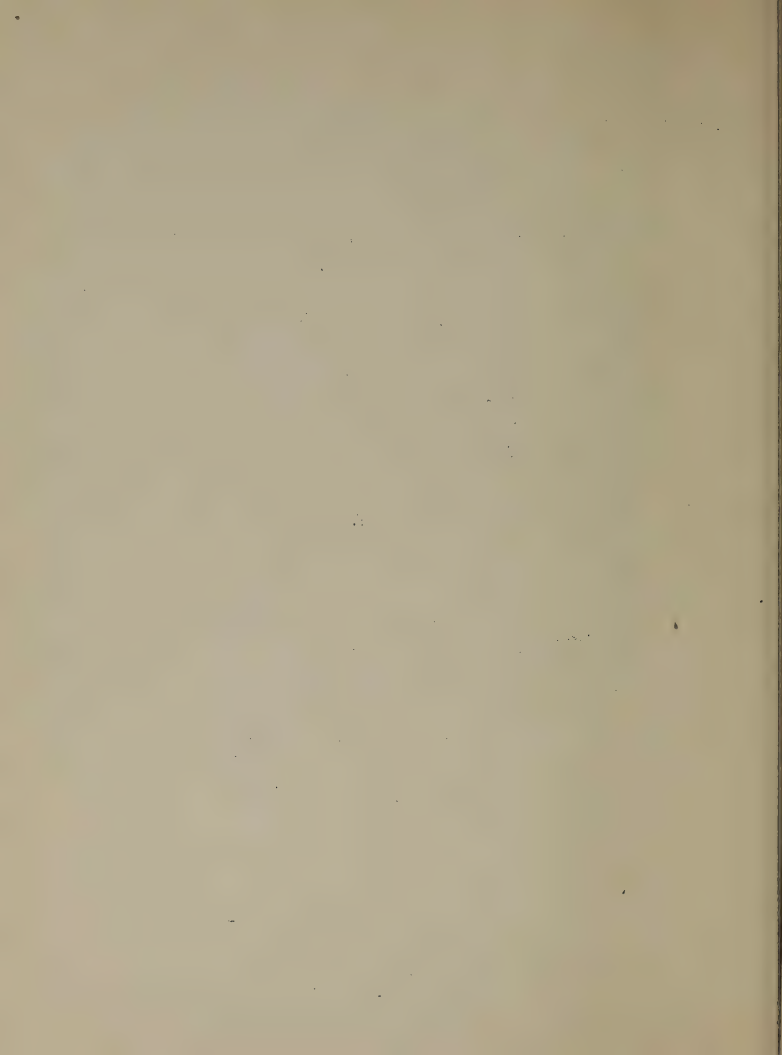
PLATE I.



Snow Bunting.



White-bellied Nuthatch.



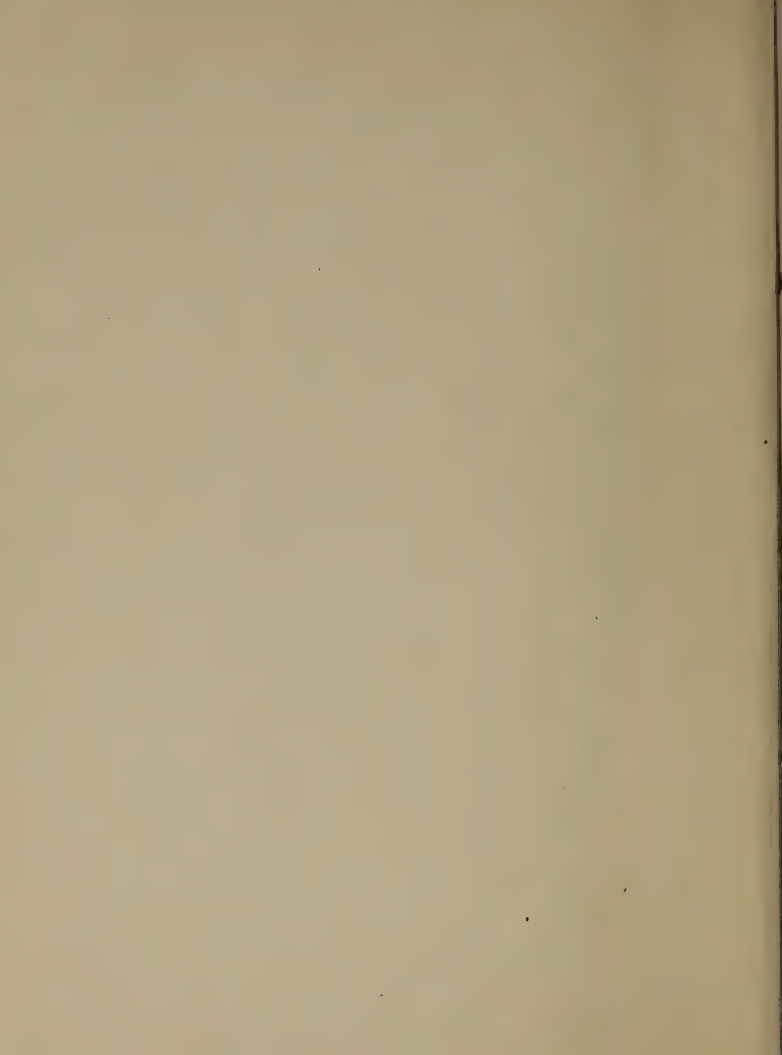


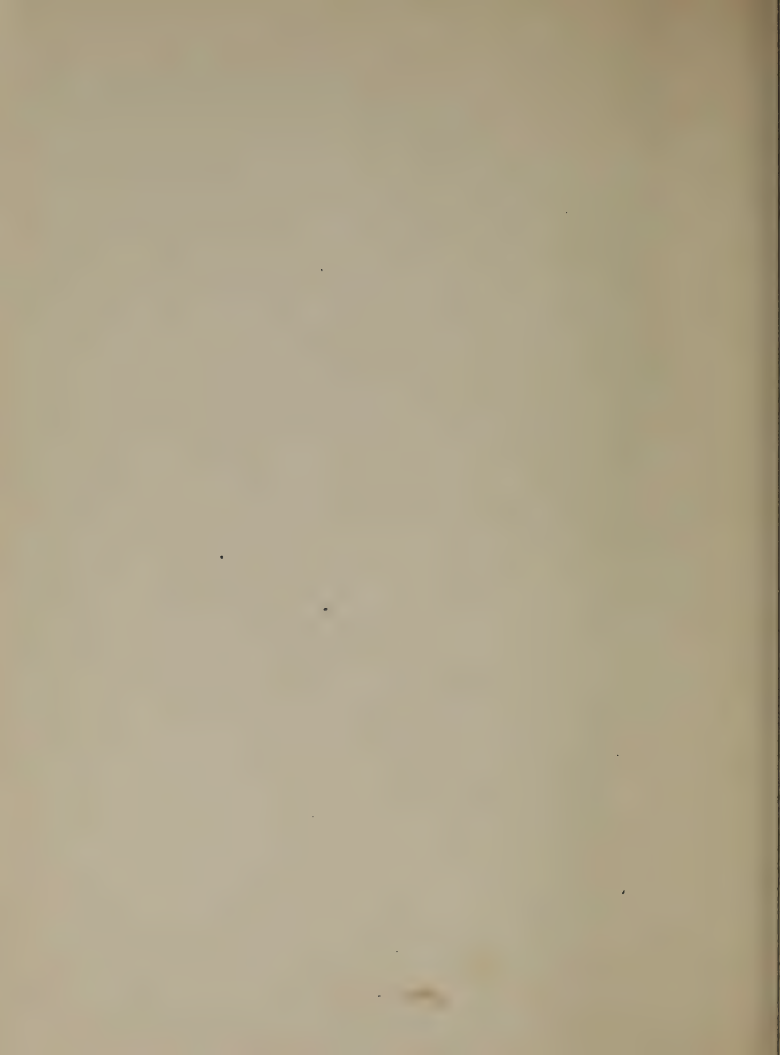
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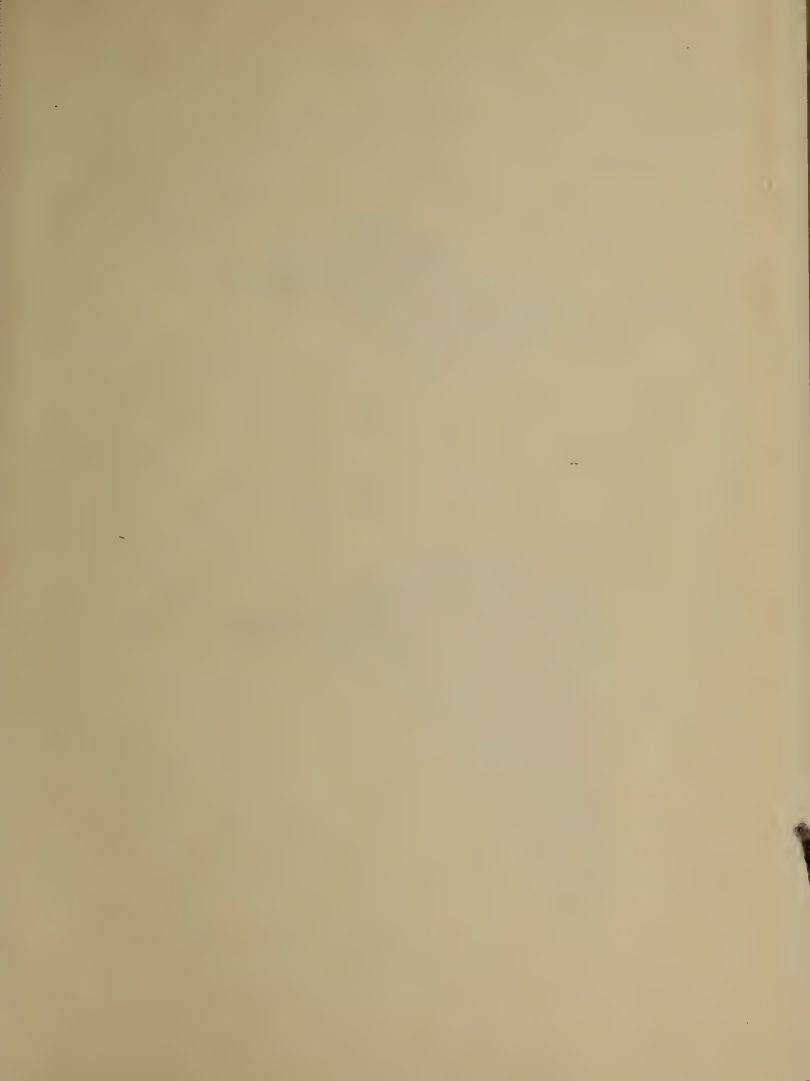


Black-polled Warbler, spring.



Black-polled Warbler, autumn.





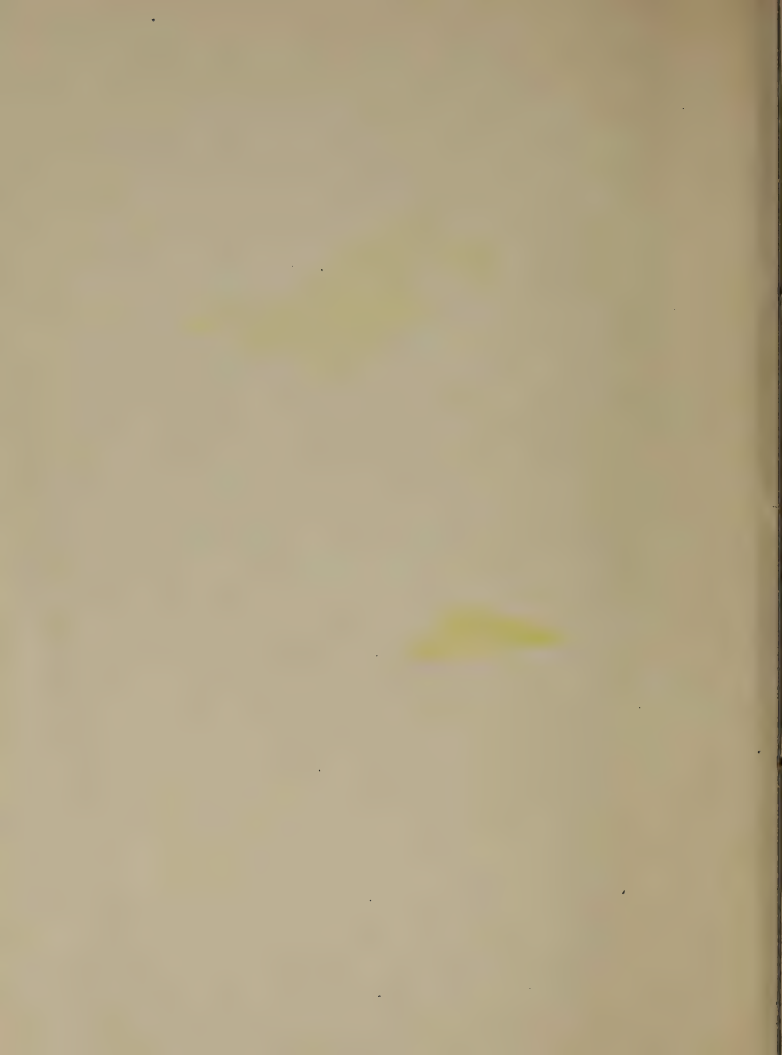


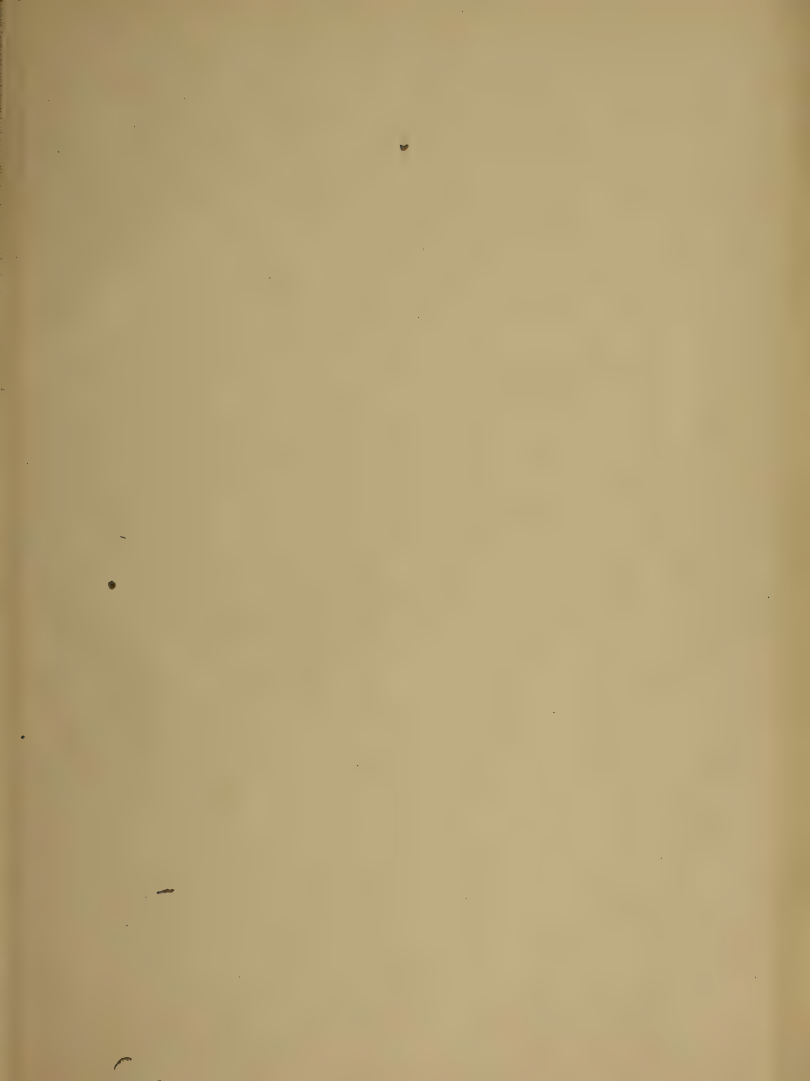
PLATE III

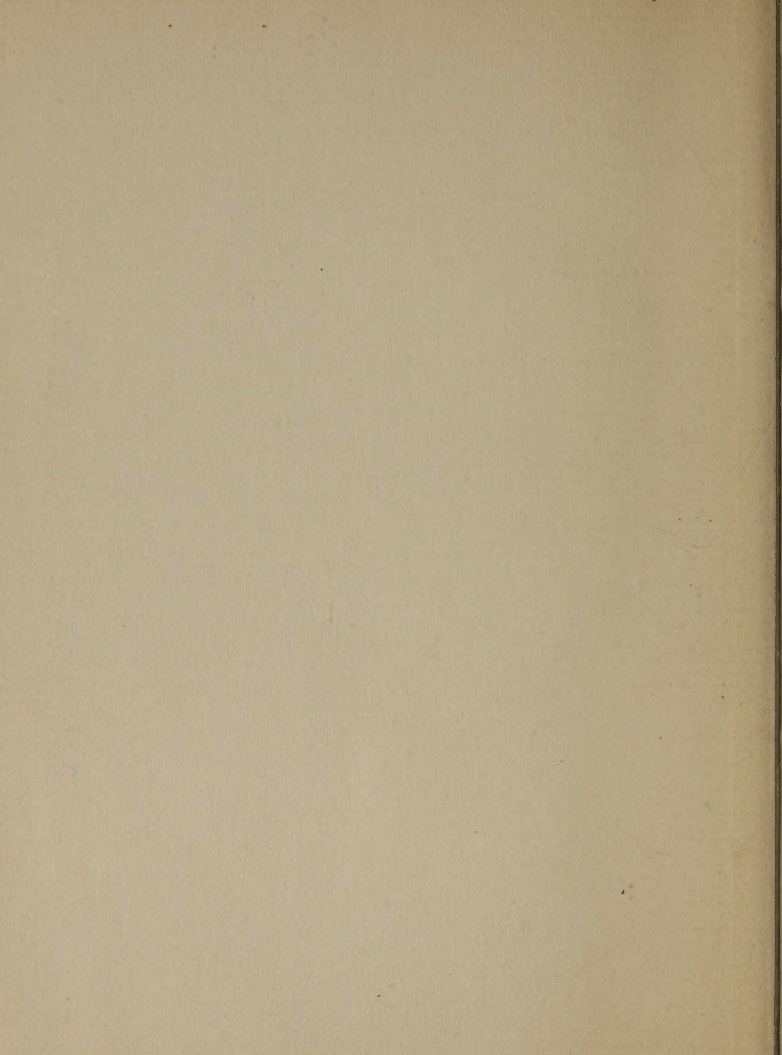


White-bellied Swallow.



Robin.







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