

one of the most restless birds I ever saw. You cannot depend upon him to be in the same place two consecutive half seconds. He runs like a Sanderling, and whenever he keeps his feet still by accident, his wings are flirited in a way that shows his anxiety to be off. Several are usually found together, and sometimes a loose flock of a hundred or more is seen. They are very strong on the wing, sometimes mounting rapidly for several hundred feet, if suddenly startled, and after a few moments spent in circling like a Snipe, they drop again almost as suddenly as a shot, and as if from the very clouds. They became scarce at Concepcion during August, and by the 10th of September none were to be found there. At Azul, February 1, 1881, they were very plenty but in poor plumage, and we continued to see them in all suitable places until our return to Buenos Aires early in April.

Their note seemed to be only a sharp chirp. Of their breeding habits I know nothing.

(To be continued.)

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## BIRD NOTES FROM WESTERN ONTARIO.

BY T. MCLWRAITH.

The winter of 1882-83 will be remembered in Western Ontario by those who are fond of observing the movements of our native birds as the one in which the Pine Grosbeaks were so plentiful. The visits of these northern strangers are by no means regular; sometimes a few pairs will be observed during January or February, and again they will be absent altogether for several years in succession, but on no previous occasion have they ever appeared in such numbers or stayed so late in the season as during the winter now drawing to a close. They were first observed in the shrubberies in and around the city about the 10th of January, and almost simultaneously with their arrival here there appeared notices in several country newspapers of the "arrival of flocks of strange birds, mostly of a smoky grey colour, but sometimes having a leader clad in glowing crimson."

While here they kept in small flocks, seldom exceeding eight in number, the proportion of adults in crimson dress being about one in twenty. Their forenoons were usually spent in feeding on the berries of the mountain ash, wherever they could be found; they were in the most frequented thoroughfares; and where the trees overhung the streets, the sidewalks were soon littered with the pulpy part of the berries, the birds using only the hard seeds. As the season advanced the supply of berries gave out, and they then resorted to the buds of the larch, and also fed freely on the fruit of such apples as they found still hanging on the trees in the orchards. In the afternoon they retired to the evergreens for rest and shelter. While here they showed the most gentle, sociable disposition, enjoying each other's company and keeping up communication by a series of soft call-notes. Occasionally, when all was still, a male would indulge in a low, soft warbling song of considerable duration, which I could fancy might be delightfully soothing in the stillness of a sick chamber, but too low to be appreciated by human ears under ordinary circumstances.

Toward the end of February the weather softened a little and the birds all left. This mild spell, however, was followed in a few days by a north-easter, accompanied with snow and sleet. Before it broke the birds returned again and sought their former shelter among the evergreens. This occurred on three successive occasions, but each time they returned in smaller numbers, and after the first departure none in the red plumage were seen. As late as the first of April a few were observed in the city, but they were evidently in transit and, calling loudly for company, seemed anxious to be off.

I think it quite probable that the peculiarities of the weather this season may have brought birds together which never saw each other before; at all events, it was a most unusual thing for us to see Pine Grosbeaks, Meadow Larks, Robins, Crossbills, Redpolls, Bluebirds, Song Sparrows, Tree Sparrows, all in one short excursion.

Being desirous of securing a few Grosbeaks where it could be done without breach of the city by-law, which forbids the use of fire-arms within the city limits. I made several excursions to the country during the severe weather for this purpose, and also to satisfy myself as to what birds were really wintering with us, and how they fared during the season of unusual severity.

Getting outside the city we at once lost sight of *Passer domesticus*, who has *not yet* betaken himself to the farm-houses, but almost immediately met with another recent addition to our birds which promises ere long to be as abundant in the country as the Sparrow is in the city. This is the *Eremophila alpestris*, Shore Lark. When I first made the acquaintance of this species twenty years ago, the few individuals observed came and went with the Snowbirds, and kept always with them while here. They were stout, well-developed birds, with the black and yellow markings clear and decided. Some ten or twelve years since a new race made its appearance, smaller in size, the colours paler, and having altogether a bleached, washed-out look about them when compared with the others. These have remained permanently, and, increasing from year to year, have now become our most common winter resident in the country. They breed very early by the road sides and in the low commons everywhere, and at this season of the year are seen either running in the road-tracks or sitting in rows of fifteen or twenty along the fences waiting till you pass that they may return to their regular feeding ground.

A ride of several miles through an open country developed nothing of ornithological interest. Sable, silent crows, flying in straight lines to some known point, were common; but the road now leads through several miles of bush containing a large proportion of evergreens, and here, if anywhere in the country, the Grosbeaks will be found. But they were not there; not a single specimen did we either hear or see. In a sheltered hollow, where tamaracks, pines, and cedars were growing thickly together, a noisy little group were enjoying themselves in a state of great hilarity notwithstanding the severe cold to which their fragile bodies were exposed. The Chickadee was apparently the leader of the company, but the Nuthatches were both there, and also the Tree-creeper, and one or two Golden-crested Kinglets, while a little Downy Woodpecker was drumming away on his own account, keeping his company in view all the time.

This ride took in a circuit of twenty-five miles, and we came back without a specimen save a poor emaciated Saw-whet Owl which we found lying peacefully on his back on the snow at the foot of a fence post, from which he probably dropped dead the night before in a fit of starvation.

On the 17th of March I made a similar excursion north of the city into the townships of East and West Flamboro', having for company, as before, the same male member of my family, aged fifteen. These townships are much broken up by cedar swamps and rough, uncleared land. Even at this advanced date the roads leading north and south were blocked with snow as high as the fences, and the farmers had taken down the rails and were traveling for miles through the fields parallel with the road to avoid the drifts. On a bare spot under a low-growing pine which stood in a cleared field, some dark colored little birds were observed hopping about among the fallen cones. A closer inspection showed them to be White-winged Crossbills; and so little did they seem to understand the effects of the gun that we got them all, seven in number, without leaving the tree. The males had partially assumed the red plumage, and the females were, as usual, green with white bars.

A few Pine Linnets were next obtained, and shortly afterwards, while passing through a swamp of mixed timber my companion had wing-tipped a Nuthatch, and was floundering through the deep snow in pursuit, when I saw him suddenly turn and fire in an opposite direction. In reply to the usual question, "What have you got?" the answer came back, "An Evening Grosbeak." Leaving the horse in the tracks I found that such was really the case; but, under fear of missing so rare a chance, he had fired too close and almost destroyed it. The call of another was still heard among the tree-tops, and in a few minutes I saw an Evening Grosbeak alive for the first time. I can't say my hand was quite steady, but I brought him down, with outstretched, quivering wings, with a single pellet through his head,—a bad place for a bird to be hit that is wanted for preservation, but in this case a little extra care was all that was needed to make a good mounted specimen. Both were young birds in the plumage of the female, and seemed as if hardly recovered from the first moult.

In the month of May, 1863, a few specimens were obtained near Woodstock, and again in May, 1871, I got three which were shot near London, but these are all I have ever heard of being found in Canada; and from the list of birds recently published by Messrs. Saunders and Morden of London, these dilligent collectors do not seem to have met with this species, which may be regarded as purely accidental here.

This ride took in a circuit of twenty miles, and convinced us that though the number of resident birds to be met with in winter is very small, yet there is always the chance of meeting unexpectedly something very rare and desirable. We were also quite satisfied that while here the Pine Grosbeaks do not remain in the bush, but keep by the towns and villages where they find the berry-bearing trees and bushes, especially the mountain ash, which yields their favorite fare.

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## NOTES ON SOME OF THE WINTER BIRDS OF MASSACHUSETTS.

BY HERBERT K. JOB.

It has been my privilege for several years past to enjoy many opportunities for observing the habits of the birds found in Eastern Massachusetts, and being less engaged during the winter season than at other times, I have been enabled to become rather better acquainted with the birds found then than with those seen at other times. Last winter (1882-83) was quite interesting as regards its feathered creatures, and it is my purpose in this article to refer to such of our visitors during that season as may be of interest to the readers of the Bulletin, and also to give some notes relative to past seasons.

All collectors in this section must have noticed how promptly most of our winter birds arrived last year; so, although my subject is winter birds, I shall have to begin back as early as October. The 11th of that month brought immense flocks of Pine Finches, some flocks containing as many as three hundred individuals. They remained mostly in localities where cone-bearing evergreens grew more or less plentifully, and were abundant until early in November, when they suddenly disappeared. A few scattering ones were seen in February, but scarcely any until a short time since, when quite a number appeared in my garden in Roxbury, feeding invariably in a small row of larch trees. Many of them were single birds, and none were