

**The Color of Natal Down in Passerine Birds.**—Some years ago I started taking notes on the appearance of young birds when newly hatched. I found that young passerine birds differed widely, not only in size, but in color of skin and in amount, distribution and color of natal down. So far as I know, nothing has been published on this subject, except that Dr. Dwight has given the color of natal down of a good many passerine species. (The Sequence of Moults and Plumages of the Passerine Birds of New York.)

In a number of species of birds I have found the natal down white in color, among them the Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius p. phoeniceus*) and the Robin (*Planesticus m. migratorius*). I was rather surprised when I came to study Dr. Dwight's work to find that the down of these two species was given as mouse-gray. This year (1919) I verified my observations concerning the down of the newly-hatched Robin, and then also verified those of Dr. Dwight. My observations were all made from living young in the nest. Dr. Dwight tells me that his were made from the skins of juvenal birds, where the natal down still adhered to the feathers. A young Robin in just such a condition was brought me by one of my pupils for identification this spring. The down still adhering to the feathers was undoubtedly mouse-gray, and in great contrast to the color of the down of newly-hatched young of this species.

It seems, therefore, that either some pigment change occurs in the down, due to exposure to light and air, or what is more probable, that the dirt and dust of nest-life change the color of the down from white to gray. Whichever cause, it is evident that the down of a number of species is probably much lighter in color when the birds are hatched than examination of older specimens would indicate.—ARETAS A. SAUNDERS, *South Norwalk, Conn.*

**Birds and Tent Caterpillars.**—For a number of years prior to 1917 the Tent Caterpillar (*Malacosoma americana*) was unusually abundant in many parts of New England and perhaps in other places. Having been in the west until 1913 I do not know just when the scourge of these insects began, but I first noticed their great numbers at Newport, R. I., in the spring of 1913. The next few years the insects appeared to spread and increase in numbers. I noted them about Norwich, Clinton, New Haven, Bridgeport, and Norwalk, Connecticut, and in the spring of 1915 at St. Albans, Vermont, where they were even more abundant, if possible, than in Connecticut.

In the winter of 1916-17, the egg clusters of the tent caterpillar seemed as abundant as ever, and early in the spring these eggs hatched, and the nests of young caterpillars began to appear. I had made it a practise each winter and early spring to destroy the eggs or young caterpillars at every opportunity. As the spring of 1917 advanced, I soon found that my work had been done for me. Each nest that I visited, with