

gan, at other times relying solely on protective coloration; and on the face of a cliff between sky and water, as in the Cliff Swallow.

But the White-throated Swift has outwitted and outfigured them all in the selection of its nest site and construction of a comfortable nest,—out of reach of floods, storms, sliding rocks, reptiles, predatory mammals and birds, and the wisest ones beyond the depredations of the most enthusiastic oological crank unless the life of the latter is insured for twice its value! This bird has eliminated practically every danger to its home except the vermin, and why it has not figured this out also is difficult for me to understand.

Denver, Colorado, February 11, 1918.

A RETURN TO THE DAKOTA LAKE REGION

By FLORENCE MERRIAM BAILEY

(Continued from page 70)

II. BIRDS OF THE UNBROKEN PRAIRIE

THE LAND bordering the Sweetwaters was nearly all in grain, but three miles to the northeast, by the section lines, there was still a strip of original, unbroken prairie, as I found to my satisfaction when invited to a family dinner by the grandparents of our little school boy. As the farm-house was torn up by repairs at the moment, a "cook car" left in the yard by a threshing outfit, a car twenty feet long by ten wide stilted up on four wheels, was used as an emergency dining-room, greatly to my delectation, as it was my first opportunity to examine one. We climbed up the high front steps—taken in before starting on the road that the four horses might be driven from the front door—and as we sat on benches drawn up to the long table fitted to serve twenty or thirty men and I looked with curiosity at the stove at the end of the car and the protected trays for dishes against the walls, the old settlers told interesting tales of the early days on the prairie.

When they had come as pioneers in 1884, prairie fires were a real danger, it was an easy matter to get lost in the big sloughs with grass standing seven or eight feet high, and buffalo bones strewn the ground. Ox cart trains of Sioux, with squaws and papooses, used to come from Fort Totten to pick up the bones to ship out for fertilizer, and the primitive ungreased wooden carts with wheels five feet high—coming usually in trains of from seven to eleven but once in a train of twenty-eight cars—as the pioneer expressed it, "squawked so" they could be heard crossing the Belgrade Bridge four miles away. For four or five years after the first settlers came, the Indians kept on "picking bones", which gives a slight idea of the hordes of buffalo that once roamed that part of the prairie.

In the narrow strip of unbroken prairie that is left, a few Prairie Chickens were still to be found. When the hunting season opened, the sound of shots made the Grandfather exclaim regretfully, "He's got them!" But the only ones seen by me in the neighborhood were on the road between the two farmhouses

beside a grassy slough. Here, as we went and came, an old hen was flushed by our dog, and she ran around so distractedly that she must have had young in hiding.

Another worried parent—a blue Marsh Hawk—flew toward me, almost up to me, when I was exploring the strip of prairie, uttering the familiar *keck-eck* that reminded me of my Stump Lake experience four years previous. When satisfied, he retreated, and flew down to the ground by a small slough where he was probably watching for meadow mice. Four days later the brown mother Marsh Hawk rose noisily from a patch of knee-high snowberry, where I was much pleased to find a nest with three eggs and two decidedly brownish downy young, whose heads wobbled about weakly over their brother eggs. One of them made a very faint noise and opened its black bill once or twice, looking up as its parent passed over. Both parents flew above my head while I was looking at the young, but as I had met with much worse treatment at the hands of their relatives, I did not pay much attention to them, and they soon desisted.

One of the Hawks, to my surprise, was chased by a Black Tern, a bird which is usually so preoccupied with its own affairs that peace reigns in its neighborhood. I wondered if he were the one I saw beating over the open slough close by when suddenly chased after by a Kingbird, chased so closely and persistently and rancorously that if he were not pecked on the back, a deep dent was made in his gray matter, for he fled precipitately through the sky, going out into its grayness. Perhaps this had given the mild mannered Tern a new idea which he was applying to the Marsh Hawk!

Ever since my experience with Circus four years previous, when the old birds refused to believe in my interest in their young and treated me with unremitting suspicion and hostility, I had been regretting that I had not had a blind from which to study them. Now I had a borrowed blind, and here was a nest to watch only three miles from home. Remembering the long interval during which the young had stayed in or about the Stump Lake nest—four or five weeks—I did not hurry back. Nine days later, armed with camp stool, camera, and blind, eager for an intimate study of birds whom my faulty methods had antagonized before, I made my way cautiously back to the nest. It was empty! I was greatly taken aback. All my well laid plans had gone agley! Marsh Hawks, of all birds, robbed of their young! Perhaps their too easy acceptance of my presence was the clue. But what enemies were abroad to take advantage of them? Could it have been one of the numerous marauding wood pussies?

I examined the nest ruefully—it was all there was left for me to do, for not even a parent was to be seen in the neighborhood. The nest, which was rather small, was well placed on a dry knoll above the slough in the middle of a snowberry patch. A passageway about a yard in length led to it from the edge of the bushes carpeted with grass like that which lined the nest. Possibly in carrying in lining material the builders had dropped parts of their loads and had gradually tramped a good path. Near the outer entrance, the passageway was about ten inches wide, but it narrowed to a concealed gateway by the nest. In the bushes about two feet from the nest was a large bare spot on which the old Hawks may have lit when feeding the young.

From the edge of a slough on which the Marsh Hawk had been seen standing—one of the deceptive grassy sloughs that you start to walk across and suddenly

find yourself wading—a brown Bittern rose, and in a painfully stiff, conscious pose—neck bent in and bill held pointedly straight out before it—flew over the slough and disappeared. Ducks also passed over and a Black Tern beat back and forth, while beautiful red prairie lilies, glowing tiger lilies of the prairie, held the sun in their chalices till it was thrilling to look down into their radiant cups.

Near the Hawk's nest, in a circle of bushes surrounding a strawberry and anemone patch, I twice flushed a Short-eared Owl, and once when it rose with a full mouthed *muff, muff*, on looking about, beside a bush I found jack rabbit feet and bits of white fur. Among the low bushes on this strip of prairie, many small sparrows flitted about, the Savannah singing as usual, the Clay-colored giving his spicy ditty, and the Vesper adding his musical quota, while Bobolinks and Western Meadowlarks contributed their lovely songs.*

But best of all the birds on this strip of prairie was the Upland Plover, whose great economic importance and rapidly decreasing numbers should make it the especial charge of those who are privileged to share its home. Its bubbling call first drew my attention, and after a little search I discovered a brown bird running along between rows of young wheat about its height, hunched over as if to make itself less conspicuous. Three others flew around high over head with characteristic level flight, upheld by quick wing beats and uttering notes that have been well syllabified by Langille as *quip-ip-ip-ip, quip-ip-ip-ip*. I had found the lovely birds at last! Besides the alarm notes, they had a song of beautiful musical notes, including a run and a clear whistle.

When I went out on the prairie, a Plover circled around me calling and, after a little, putting its feet down ahead of its body, dropped down on the ground, where, with long neck raised to full height above its plump form, it walked around inspecting me. So intent was it on this inspection that it came up within twenty feet of me, looking at me inquiringly with its big gentle eyes, saying *quip-ip-ip-ip, quip-ip-ip-ip* in reproachful tones as if its feelings had been hurt by my obtrusiveness. When remonstrating with me in this way it held its bill so wide open that I could see down its yellow throat. The whole performance was so strikingly comical and voluble that afterwards, when the bill was closed, by contrast *Bartramia* seemed surprisingly self contained and reticent.

Walking around in front of me, presumably holding my attention for the protection of a brood hidden in the grass, it would chatter and go through a variety of motions, sometimes as it walked nodding its head like a Pipit, sometimes standing erect throwing its head and long bill forward with a curious Heron-like spearing gesture, after which it would stand with neck at an angle. These various motions, if employed in the family circle must certainly be helpful to young looking for dun colored parents. And so protectively colored are the Upland Plover that the young need just such help, for even the long neck is inconspicuous in the grass, the dark narrow line down its back holding the eye so that the roundness of the lighter part fades into the background and the neck is reduced almost to a grass line. The young, to whose benefit all this fine work of Nature accrues, in this case were undoubtedly hidden in the grass not far away; for faint whistles that I did not succeed in locating were apparently answered by a loud liquid call given in quick imperative tones—*whapahwha* or *whee'tahwah*—presumably Ploverese for "*Keep quiet!*" A second parent was probably watching the brood, for I once caught its note. As I looked about, a jack rabbit which with banners flying seemed to be all white

tail, jumped up and went bounding off over the prairie flowers. And how bright and pretty the flowers looked!—white, pink, yellow, and blue.

Three days later no anxious parents flew over to meet my approach, none appeared to question my presence on the dry knoll; but beyond the slough, between two beautiful oblongs of solid yellow mustard lay a strip of brown earth recently plowed by a traction engine with its gangplow that I had been watching as it moved back and forth on the horizon, and from this direction Plover voices were coming. On crossing the first fragrant mustard field, enjoying its vivid color and sweet odor with its suggestion of the head high mustard fields of southern California, I heard small voices down among the stalks that I imagined were those of the young Plover, and a pair of adults flew about, disturbed when getting their evening meal from the dark mellow earth.

One of the pair lit on the plowed ground, its long neck bent in like a Heron's and, stilted up on its long legs, trotted toward me opening wide its bill taking me to task. Flying up it again took a turn around over the mustard, afterwards realighting and walking up within about twenty feet of me, so close that I could distinguish the fine barring of its neck and sides. Black Terns went by with their thin *ek, ek*, a Marsh Hawk swept over the mustard, a Bobolink sang, and the breeze brought the heliotrope-like fragrance of the beautiful yellow acre.

About two weeks later when I went to take a last look for the Plover, they had apparently left the neighborhood, but I had a memorable walk. Making my way slowly through the blooming mustard, I had once again the rare prairie experience of encompassing clouds closing in about me; but this time the golden acre was the circle enclosed, a sun-filled peaceful acre reflecting the serenity of the sky.

A bubbling note heard on an August night, and a flock of birds that I took to be Upland Plover passing swiftly overhead, closed a chapter that was one of the best in all my summer. Would that these lovely birds, with their rich, musical notes, their trustful ways and their large gentle eyes might abound in the land to delight the hearts of all true bird lovers!

In driving back and forth from the home of the Upland Plover, I saw a number of interesting sights. One day it was a small band of Black Terns hovering over black earth being turned up by a five horse gang plow. On other days four Mourning Doves, almost the first seen, flew from a field; again three Chestnut-collared Longspurs rose from a fence; and—near a big straw stack in a field alive with ground squirrels—a Short-eared Owl flapped along in broad daylight.

But the most interesting sight by the way was on a day when our little school boy and I were returning from his grandfather's in the two-wheeled sulkey, accompanied by the family dog. As old Polly jogged along, suddenly a big bird with long flapping wings came screaming toward us, followed presently by two nearly grown young. As we watched astonished, they crossed the road ahead of us and flew down by a pool of water on the other side of the road, as they did so, raising such striking black and white banded wings that I exclaimed delightedly, "Willetts!" At first the young stood on the brown field while their mother stood around trying to decoy us away, but when we did not go, and no harm came to the young, she finally lit near them for a few moments. On the brown earth they all looked dim, their brown toning in almost to invisibility. Quite different they were from the Upland Plover,

though not so very different in size. Slender instead of plump bodied on their long legs, the Willet's head motion was less pronounced than the spearing of the Plover, suggesting rather a forward gaze than an active movement.

In hard metallic tones, though with individual quality, the mother kept crying, *Wil-let, wil-let*, as she flew around us, the broad black and white areas of her wings and the white base and dusky tip of her tail showing handsomely, her long legs extending beyond her body as she flew, being dropped down before alighting. Decoying with heroic fearlessness, she flew around close over us, lighting in the grass beside the road, on the road ahead of the dog, and actually on the side of the pool in which the dog stood—where she was reflected in the water. No exposure was too great, no risk too heavy to draw the fire from her young. When at last we started on the frantic mother actually flew down in the road and ran ahead of the dog. Attracted by some slight motion in the opposite field we discovered two more young standing by a tiny pool, from which the three had probably come at first. No wonder she was distracted, with four young, two on either side of us!

When we had gone nearly a mile, the quick-eared child interrupted our talk, exclaiming, "I hear a Willet," and sure enough, there was the old bird still following us! She may have had some other errand of her own, as she was flying toward the lake, but in any case, her devotion to her family knew no bounds. The prairie seemed enriched by the adventure. And yet, like the Upland Plover, the Willet is said to be doomed unless those who have the right, soon stay the hands with the gun.

(To be continued)

COSTA'S HUMMINGBIRD—ITS TYPE LOCALITY, EARLY HISTORY AND NAME

By T. S. PALMER

CALYPTE *COSTAE*, collected by Neboux, described by Bourcier, named in honor of Costa, and based on a specimen from "California", has long been shrouded in mystery as to the history of its collector, its describer, and its namesake, as well as to its type locality. In 1839 Jules Bourcier, the French trochilidist, in one of his earliest papers on hummingbirds, described a specimen from California under the name *Ornismya costae* in the "Revue Zoologique" (II, p. 294, Oct. 1839). Two other notes published in the following volume of the "Revue Zoologique" should be read in connection with this description. In one published by Longuemare and Parzudaki (III, p. 71, May, 1840), reference is made to the original description, but the type locality is given as "Baie de la Madeleine, basse Californie". This statement is significant in view of the fact that it was through Parzudaki that Bourcier obtained his specimen. In the other, Dr. Neboux (III, p. 289, Oct. 1840) begs the Director of the "Revue Zoologique" to state that "le Souimanga dont M. de La Fresnaye a fait un genre sous le nom de *Heterorhynchus olivaceus* et l'Oiseau-