

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Watermelon as Warbler Food.—It is our custom to maintain pieces of ripe watermelon on a window food-ledge during the summer and early autumn. Many species of birds partake greedily of the red pulp, and occasionally even a dainty warbler finds it attractive.

On September 1, 2, and 3, 1928, a male Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica aestiva*, subsp.), in new autumn plumage, spent the whole of each day at or near the ledge, dividing his time between the branches of the surrounding shrubs and the watermelon. He ate the red pulp with apparent eagerness and delight, coming every few minutes for a few bites. That the warbler did eat the pulp was easily seen from the window, as bits of red were "masticated" before swallowing and at such times were glimpsed between his mandibles. A tiny rock pool a few feet away could have satisfied his thirst, had unflavored water sufficed.

On September 27, 28, and 29, 1929, another warbler duplicated the performance, except that it seemed less attentive to the watermelon in the afternoons, when the ledge and surrounding shrubbery were in shade. Fortunately, bird skins were available and when I laid specimens of Yellow (female), Tennessee, and Lutescent Warblers on the window sill a few inches from the live warbler, and the repeated returns of the latter gave ample opportunity for comparison, its identity as a Tennessee Warbler (*Vermivora peregrina*) seemed positive. It agreed in every detail with a female specimen of this species taken by me on September 17, 1896, at Madison, Wisconsin: smoked line through the eye under a pale superciliary, greenish color tones dorsally, ventrally paler with whitish belly, absence of conspicuous edgings on wings, evenly-tapered acute beak.

During one of the absences of the Tennessee Warbler, as an experiment, I substituted halves of ripe tomato for the watermelon, pulling the pieces of the latter farther back on the ledge. On its next return, after a moment's hesitation, the bird thrust its beak into the cut side of the tomato and ate a bit of its pulp and then took another bite before apparently realizing the difference. Pausing, it spied the watermelon and went to it, and after that, so far as we saw, paid no further attention to the tomato.

It seems a safe surmise that neither of these warblers had encountered watermelon pulp before. So far as I know none of our American warblers have the watermelon habit. Perhaps, though, the adaptation is not involved. Birds are quick to detect the glisten of globules of water, which beckon to their thirst. A trial drink does the rest, when it is of watermelon and the bird is a warbler. And because sipping is too slow, when the food is so good, the warbler bites off the pulp to crush out the juice in its throat. But it does seem a little strange that the taste sense of a warbler to which bitter (?) worms and bitterer (??) spiders and gnats are prime delicacies, should find instant delight in the sweetness of watermelon. Perhaps there are specific palatal differentiations as between the sweet and the bitter worms. Will some one please come forward and taste worms?—J. EUGENE LAW, Altadena, California, October 10, 1929.

Prodigious Drillings of a Williamson Sapsucker.—On the morning of October 13, 1929, we discovered a young male Williamson Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*) in the pine wood near the Indian Caves, Yosemite Valley. When first seen the bird was at work drilling a hole in the bark of a great yellow pine. He was a shy bird and when we approached the tree where he was at work he flew to another tree some fifty yards away. After we chased him around through the tree-tops for some time we returned to the tree where he was first seen that we might make a study of the work done. Having had previous experience with sapsuckers of different sorts we knew them to be tremendous workers; still, we were amazed by the prodigious amount of work that had here been accomplished.

The tree in which the Williamson Sapsucker had staked his winter claim was a yellow pine which measured ten feet in circumference five feet above the ground. It was, perhaps, 150 years old and the bark was almost an inch thick. For seventy-five feet the trunk was quite free from limbs, nor were there any scars of old branches. There was, however, a series of concentric welts at intervals of from