

warble of five or six notes repeated several times without pauses between, but of less duration than often heard from other species such as the Song Sparrow. At the close of their stay the song had undergone no apparent change, and during this period no adult birds of this species of either sex were seen or heard at or about the station; in fact, none has been seen or heard close by for several years. During this period, however, and both before and afterwards when adult birds were heard singing elsewhere, they in no particular departed from their usual type of song and in no case, at any time of the year, have I heard adult birds sing the weak warble of these juvenile warblers, nor have I been able to find any references to such a song in their repertory. Observation during last summer at nesting-time and in August failed to discover an adult of this species singing the warble type of song. I am therefore forced to the conclusion in this case that the young Yellow-throats were singing a song they had never heard, a simple song sung long ago by their ancestors, a song believed to have been built up by repeatedly stringing together the then call notes of the species, which by elaboration has become the song of the adult birds, a song discarded at maturity never to be sung again. Bird-banders are asked to keep this matter in mind in order that instances of the same kind, among this species or among other singing birds, may be recorded.

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#### GENERAL NOTES

**Wells River (Vermont) Bird Notes.** — One day during the nesting-season of 1924 I saw near my banding station at Wells River, Vermont, a Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) fly past with some small twigs in its bill. The operation was several times repeated, and by observing the line of flight I soon located the bird's destination, a small apple tree with an intergrowing grape-vine. Here I found a partially-constructed nest placed about six feet from the ground.

Early the next morning I was approaching the site from a different angle, when I heard the Waxings' call-note, and upon looking up I saw a pair flying to the nest, each with a small, dead twig in its mandibles. Soon they flew back to a dead hemlock which was about two hundred feet from the nest. Each bird grasped a twig in its bill and by twisting and pulling broke it off. Apparently this was difficult, although no prolonged effort was required.

The nest of these birds was composed approximately thirty-three per cent of hemlock twigs, six to seven inches long, the largest having a diameter of about an eighth of an inch, used most plentifully near the top and woven in with grass and weed stems. A single feather and a piece of string also entered into the structure.

I have seen no reference in the literature describing the use of nesting-material procured in this manner, and the origin of the instinct, if such it be, is of considerable interest, for it raises the question whether a new

habit is being acquired by this species or whether I was witnessing the survival of a primitive custom which once might well have included gathering all nesting-material in this manner. If the latter view seems to be the more probable, it is natural to speculate why the species adopted such a laborious process of procuring nesting-material and the conditions under which the habit was gradually lost.

It has been a custom of mine for a number of years at nesting-time to place a considerable quantity of chickens' feathers in my garden for the use of Swallows in nest-building. Our four nesting species use them extensively, the Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon l. lunifrons*), the Barn Swallow (*Hirundo erythrogaster*), The Tree Swallow (*Iridoprocne bicolor*), and the Bank Swallow (*Riparia riparia*), but especially the latter species. I have seen fifteen or twenty Bank Swallows at the same time flying about these feathers, which were placed on the ground, gathering them up usually on the wing, and it is a beautiful sight to see with what ease, grace, and variety of movement the feathers are secured. The nearest colony of this last species known to me is located a half-mile distant.—WENDALL P. SMITH, March, 1925.

**Juvenile Birds.**—Banders should make every effort to recognize birds-of-the-year when they have them in hand, and their record-cards and note-books should record the fact. Not every bander handles fledglings, but most of us have visits from juvenile birds during July and August which should be identified as such in most instances, thus recording the age of the bird within narrow limits. At this season, juvenile birds may be recognized by the softness of the plumage and the absence of feather-wear. A lens is very useful to study the condition of the plumage, particularly the tips of the tail and wing feathers. The tarsi of many young birds are commonly larger than those of old birds. It is quite possible and very desirable to become acquainted with the fall and winter plumages of birds about banding stations, for sex and immaturity in several species can often be accurately determined at these seasons if the published data be studied. The best papers dealing with the subject, from the inland bander's point of view, are: "The Molting of Birds with Special Reference to the Plumages of the Smaller Land Birds of Eastern North America," by Witmer Stone, Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, 1896, pages 108-167, and "The Sequence of Plumages and Moults of the Passerine Birds of New York", by Jonathan Dwight, Jr., Annals of the New York Academy of Science, Vol. XIII, No. 1, 1900, pages 73-348, with seven plates. Many libraries contain copies of these periodicals. Dr. Dwight's article contains a splendid bibliography of the papers treating of the subject.

**Recent Song Sparrow Returns.**—One of the first birds I ever banded was Song Sparrow number 11057. This was on August 5, 1921, at Cohasset, Massachusetts. On account of the time of the year the bird may have been a juvenile. During 1922 nothing was seen of it, and this was true also of 1924, but on July 10, 1923, it returned after an apparent absence of two years. After an absence of another two years, 11057 was again taken at my station on March 15, 1925, the first Song Sparrow banded this year. On the assumption that the bird was a young-of-the-year when banded, it is now approximately four years old. Of course, however, it may well be even older.

On July 20, 1924, I banded three juvenile Song Sparrows, Nos. 125225, 125227 and 125229, and one adult bird, No. 125226. These four birds were trapped together in a government sparrow trap, and the adult bird