

exclusively, in young males just assuming their first nuptial plumage.

Our opinion has already been expressed that certain yellow patches present on adult male Goldfinches in midwinter are probably holdover areas of the previous yellow summer plumage. That this view is a reasonable one may be fairly urged from the facts (1) that only adult male birds possessed such patches; (2) their occurrence in repeated instances during midwinter, much earlier than undoubted prenuptial molt was first observed, except the appearance of black feathers on the forehead; and (3) that the patches did not increase in size for weeks, which they would have done had they been an earlier phase of the undoubted prenuptial molt of the body feathers that began, as stated, on March 23d. We are aware that in advancing this explanation as to the nature of the midwinter yellow patches we are running counter, though in a very minor way, to the accepted view of the completeness of the post-nuptial molt in all birds, but, as the above is in reality a "progress report" on our study of this species as the bird-bander approaches the matter, no harm should result from setting forth our present reaction to the phenomena observed, even though conclusiveness is lacking.

GENERAL NOTES

Catbird History. — It is interesting to note that cases are gradually accumulating in bird-banding records which indicate more or less permanent marital relations among birds. I can now add the Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*) to the list of species in which we find the same birds mated for more than one season.

Catbird 46319 (♂), banded at our Peterboro, N. H., station in 1923, had that year as mate Catbird 46323 (♀). They nested close to the house, in a syringa thicket, where a shelf, bearing raisins and nailed to a window-ledge, was provided for them. This was extensively patronized to obtain food for themselves and their young. These birds were almost certainly the pair which had nested in the same clump of shrubbery and made use of the same raisin-shelf in 1922, but we lack proof of this point, as the birds werenot banded in 1922. At that time, we relied for identification — as was usually necessary in pre-banding days — only on our intimate acquaintance with the birds, their habits and little mannerisms, including the distinctive song in this case of the male.

In the spring of 1924, Catbird 46319 (♂) returned to the banding station on May 8th, immediately visited the raisin-shelf, and spent much time in the syringa thicket. He remained alone until May 16th, when he was joined by a Catbird (♀), unbanded, but later receiving No. 117437. This at first glance might seem like inconstancy, but as Catbird 46323 (♀) has never, in the two succeeding seasons, appeared at our station, it is fair to assume that she was one of the casualties of the winter 1923-1924. It is

necessary in considering this subject, to bear in mind the great percentage of losses of individuals every year, and the consequent need of new mates. The male's long period of waiting, in this case eight days, before acquiring a new consort, indicates that the new union was not hastily entered upon. This pair of Catbirds, 46319 and 117437, raised two broods in 1924, and built their nests, not in the syringas, but in a clump of young evergreens on another side of the house. In the spring of 1925, Catbird 46319 (♂) returned to the station on May 11th. Immediately he began to busy himself, now an experienced "family man", with the beginnings of a nest in the syringa thicket where his nest had been in 1923 (and probably in 1922). When, however, his mate appeared, on May 14th, the nest-foundation in the syringas was abandoned, and a nest was at once begun in the young evergreens chosen by them (or by her?) in 1924. The female, when taken, proved to be No. 117437, the same mate as in 1924, and this pair is continuing together down to the present writing. The female of this pair has returned to our station once, and the male has returned twice. We find it convenient, in keeping station-records and in speaking of our returned birds, to designate the number of times a bird has returned by an exponent figure: thus, Catbird 46319 is a return². Should he return another season, he will become a return³; and so on. — HELEN GRANGER WHITTLE, Peterboro, N. H., July 1st, 1925.

A Problem in Ecology. — Many birds, for reasons apart from climate, latitude, and ascertainable peculiarities of habitat, have an irregular distribution both as to time and place. This is true both as to breeding-homes and migration-resorts. Swamp Sparrows, for instance, habitually frequent certain swamps, while they stubbornly avoid others near by, apparently similar, which look just as inviting to the human eye. A county map showing the location of the various swamps furnishing breeding-homes to these birds, or resorted to by migrants, would show — what? Every bird-lover much afiel at nesting-time knows that while this species nests throughout our territory, it is only infrequently seen. Those who are unacquainted with its common, simple song will pass it by, and doubtless this is one reason that its occurrence is not more frequently reported. During migration the case is different. Then the species is apparently silent and is seldom seen. Another reason it is not more frequently reported is the difficulty of identifying it in all its different plumages. Little is known about the details of its migration-routes. Are its lines of migration due north and south by way of swamps fortuitously located, or are they determined by landmarks?

I desire information concerning the Swamp Sparrow's abundance, migration, and habits from all over New England, especially from towns east of the Connecticut River and approximately north and south of Belchertown. I am particularly desirous of obtaining information from our various members as to the number and ecological character of the frequented swamps in their vicinity, and whether visited merely in migration or for nesting-purposes. Thank you. — EDWARD GOULD ROWLAND, M. D., Belchertown Massachusetts State School.

Notes on Tree Sparrows (*Spizella m. monticola*). — From the first of January until spring Tree Sparrows came nearly every day to my traps. As little is known about where birds spend the night, I became interested in watching this particular flock in the hope that something might be