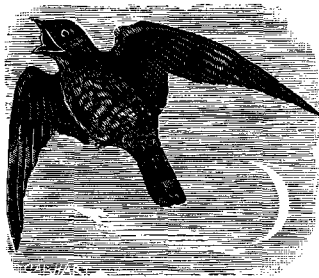


THE NIGHTHAWK.

Chordeiles virginianus.

BY L. O. PINDAR, HICKMAN, KY., PRES. Y. O. A.

The Nighthawk, almost universally called "Bullbat" and sometimes "Whip-poor-will" and "Goatsucker," is a common migrant here in Kentucky, arriving early in May and September.



NIGHTHAWK.

In the spring migrations, usually three or four are seen some evening about seven o'clock; two or three days later more are seen, and as a rule, it is a week before they become common. Then they commence to leave, getting scarcer every night, till all are gone.

In the fall it is different. They generally arrive in a body, earlier in the day, and they go on through. There is no "stop for refreshments."

Only a few laggards are seen for a day or two following, and then all are gone.

One fall, I think it was in 1887, two large flocks, containing together at least three hundred individuals, made their appearance about four o'clock in the afternoon of a rainy, disagreeable day. They kept in a rather compact body, and moved steadily southward, only occasionally would one make a dash to one side and immediately return to the ranks. In half an hour, yes! in twenty minutes, they had passed out of sight. One was seen the next day, flying about in a desultory way; but he too disappeared and no more were seen till the next spring.

People outside of Ornithological circles seem to know nothing of the habits of this bird (we Ornithologists don't know much.) The name "Goatsucker" alludes to a superstition implied in the name. And those who call it "Whip-poor-will" confound it with another bird, of widely different appearance when closely examined. The name "hawk" is a misnomer (I told a boy the "Bullbat" was a Nighthawk, and he wanted to know if it would kill chickens.)

It was probably so named from a certain resemblance in flight to several of our hawks with long and pointed wings. And this reminds me of the fact that I have seen the Nighthawk and the Sparrow Hawk fly for a short distance by flapping the wings alternately. I have never seen this mode of flying practiced by any other bird and have never seen a note of the habit in any of our Ornithological publications.

Dr. Coues aptly describes the bird when he calls it a "winged greyhound." One of the most remarkable habits of this interesting bird is its soaring aloft in the mating season, and dashing to the ground, making at the same time a peculiar, hollow, "booming noise," which can not easily be described.

The manner in which this sound is produced has never been satisfactorily explained. Some think it is produced by the "sudden expansion of the mouth while passing through the air"; others claim just as strongly that it is made by the wings. I have formed no opinion yet, and it is not probable that we shall soon discover the solution of the puzzle. There are good reasons given for accepting either of the above theories.

The Nighthawk builds no nest as a rule. In fact, the few twigs or leaves occasionally found can scarcely be said to constitute a nest. The eggs are generally laid on the bare ground, sometimes on a sandbar, on the surface of a flat rock, or even on the roofs of the houses in a city.

I have heard and read stories of the Nighthawk carrying their eggs, and even young, from one place to another, when their nesting or rather hatching place had been discovered. Other birds, the Woodcock, *Philohela minor* for instance, have the same habit, and it is a well known fact that the Wood or Summer Duck, *Aix sponsa* carry their offspring from the nest, often twenty or thirty feet high, to the water's edge.

The eggs of this bird are two in number, and are among the most variable in color. The ground color varies from creamy-white to a stony-gray tint, and they are spotted, blotched, lined and fretted in every conceivable way with different shades of gray, brown, stone color, slate and lilac; probably no two eggs being exactly the same.

Unlike the Whip-poor-will, the Nighthawk does not prefer thick woods and wet places, choosing rather open, dry sites, with plenty of sunlight, which no doubt helps to hatch the eggs when the parent birds are off the nest.

The Nighthawk is by no means a nocturnal bird, being often seen hours before twilight and sometimes even in the glare of noontide.

It is much persecuted at times by sportsmen, its winding, twisting and rapid flight affording excellent practice in wing-shooting.

Altogether, the Nighthawk is one of the most interesting and remarkable birds we have, and a careful investigation of its habits will amply repay any observer, besides affording him the chance of being able to solve the mystery of the curious notes above mentioned.

THE NASHVILLE WARBLER.

Helminthophila ruficapilla.

BY WM. L. KELLS, LISTOWEL, ONT., CANADA.

The life-history of this bird is yet, to a great extent, wrapped in obscurity. Sometimes it is numerous in the spring migration; again it is comparatively rare. It can only yet be regarded as a migrant in the south and central parts of Ontario, as no certain record has yet been made of its nesting, or making its summer home in this locality; though it is very probable that more of this genus of birds may remain during the summer, and nest in the deep, swampy woods of this Province, than is now generally known.

In my early days, while rambling in the forest, or at work in the woods in the summer time, I have seen nests of little birds, never since discovered by me, and almost every year since I began to form my Oological collection, I have taken one or more nests of Warblers previously unknown to me, and as I occasionally catch glimpses of others in my hunting excursions in the summer season, I am led to believe, that as time progresses and more attention is given to the subject, more nests of these birds will be discovered and described by our rising Ornithologists, and among others that of the Nashville Warbler. This is the more probable in the case of this species, from the fact that its general habitat is in deep, swampy places, where few persons interested in Ornithology care to penetrate, and also from the fact that specimens of this species are occasionally observed on the margins of swampy woods, in the summer season.