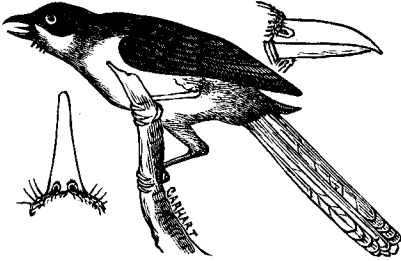


THE MOCKINGBIRD.

Mimus polyglottos.

BY J. A. SINGLEY, GIDDINGS, TEXAS.

This prince among the feathered songsters is very commonly dressed ; upper parts ashy gray ; lower parts soiled white. The wings are dark with a large white space on the primaries ; length, about 10 inches ; extent, about 14 inches. During the winter, the "Mocker" will be found mostly in the bottoms, where they feed on the various berries found there. A few remain in their summer quarters. A red cedar tree in my yard is the bedroom of one jaunty fellow, he roosting with the chickens.



MOCKINGBIRD.

The "Mocker" is rather an overbearing kind of a fellow. I have never seen him attack other birds ;

but he takes especial delight in alighting on a limb where some bird of another species may be resting, and crowding up to it (exactly as a "bully" among the genus "Homo" may often be seen to do) he will make it take to flight, when he follows after, until the other bird leaves in disgust.

During the winter, *Mimus* warbles only his own ditty (not an elaborate performance) ; but when the breeding season arrives everything is changed. Then he is so full of music that he don't lose a moment. I have whiled away many an hour, watching "my" bird, as I call the one that nests at my door. He will fly on the housetop and deliver a few notes, then to an outbuilding, singing as he flies, then perhaps to the woods, and you hardly miss him until he is back again to the tree where his wife is incubating. Alighting on one of the lower limbs, he rises, half flying, half hopping, until the top of the tree is reached, then flying straight up five or ten feet and fluttering back again. All this time he is singing the notes of every bird he ever heard. Sometimes, to vary his tune, he'll imitate the mewling

of a cat ; again he'll set the old hen crazy by imitating the cry of a chick in distress. It is a puzzle to me when he eats, as this is kept up all day. Sometimes he sings until midnight, and occasionally all night long. Like most birds, the female does all the work of nest-building, the male making the noise ; but after the family comes he is a model husband, and very little music does he indulge in until the little ones are able to take care of themselves.

The Mockingbird is not very particular as to a nesting site. He is a social fellow and generally builds close to some residence, that is, in the country. The only exception to this rule being the nests found on the prairies. They never build in the woods remote from dwellings, neither do they build close to a deserted dwelling.

The nest is a bulky structure, the ground work being a platform of good sized twigs. On this, the nest proper is built, out of weeds, small twigs and grasses ; lined with fine, brown rootlets. The nests are found in almost every position ; sometimes in a small bush not more than six or eight inches above the ground ; sometimes in trees fifty feet up ; then again in brush piles, or on the corners of a rail fence, and I even found a nest in a hollow stub from which I had once taken a set of eggs of the Texan Screech Owl.

The number of eggs in a set is generally four or five. Sets of three and six are also found, but not often. The eggs vary a great deal in size and markings. The typical egg is of a pale greenish-blue, mottled with spots, specks and blotches of yellowish and dark brown, and lilac or purplish shell markings. These markings and spots are often confluent at the larger end, forming a wreath. Some eggs are entirely covered with brown at the larger end, and again others are found where the pale brown is distributed over the whole egg in light and darker shades ; entirely concealing the ground color. The handsomest eggs, I find, however, are of a bright greenish-blue, plentifully speckled with chocolate brown and the purplish shell markings. A correspondent to whom I sent a set of eggs of the last variety wrote me : "I did not think that the Mockingbird laid such beautiful eggs." Average size of eggs, .97x.74 inches.

I've given a long account of the "Mocker" for two reasons ; *i. e.* because he deserves it, and also for the reason that several articles lately appearing in various magazines are simply caricatures of the bird and its habits, and were probably written by persons who have had little opportunity to study the bird in its uncaged state.

[B. S. O.]