

As we were going out to the yacht, I saw some strange birds flying over the beach a short distance down the shore. I persuaded one of the crew to row me down to them. I saw one of the birds flying over the water, and it looked as if it had a bright red tail. On shooting one it proved to be a fine male specimen of the Black Guillemot, and as its tail is quite short and feet red, it gave it the appearance, when flying, of having a red tail. I found these birds quite plentiful among the rocks. This was the only island on which I found them.

That they were breeding I soon found out by hearing the young among the rocks, but we could not get at them. I think it was too late for eggs. I found a few pieces of shells lying around on the rocks.

After dinner I began to prepare the eggs I had taken. I found I had quite a job before me, and it was three days before I finished them, preparing a few at a time. I was not able to save more than one egg out of six, as some of the birds in them were very large.

The young birds were kept in a pen on deck; fed on fish, clams, lobsters, etc. It was quite a job to furnish them with food, but they afforded us much amusement during the rest of the trip. Some of these same gulls may be seen in Haverhill to-day, seemingly as contented as at the native islands.

DIFFICULTIES.

BY C. S. BRIMLEY, RALEIGH, N. C.—MARCH, 1890.

Collecting eggs has its disappointments and perplexities as well as successes, and as the collecting season will soon be here, a few remarks on the subject may be in order. One difficulty that has often bothered me is how to find out when a nest contains a full set of eggs, in a case where it is impossible to look into the nest, and this often causes one to leave the next nests too long, and then the set, if saved, is adorned with holes one could almost get one's head through (figuratively speaking, I mean).

For instance, last spring we located a number of Pine Warbler nests building, and decided on a certain day to take them.

Now these nests had all been commenced within a few days of one another, and there was no reason for supposing one nest much more advanced than the rest. The result was as follows: 1st, set of four fresh; 2d, a beautiful nest empty; 3d, three eggs incubated; 4th, set of four commenced; 5th, one egg. This was the only nest we could feel in, and we afterwards took a set of three from it; 6th, an empty nest; yet all these ought to have had full sets of fresh eggs.

Then again I found a Nuthatch's nest in a dead stub in a swamp; I knew there ought to be a nest somewhere near, but from the date was afraid the eggs would be incubated. The stub was rotten and the climbers did not hold well, but I got the result of my labors in safety—four fresh eggs.

Then again Hummingbirds have a bad habit of building their nest where one can't get at them. I had one curious but fortunate experience with one last summer. I had found an old nest and was looking around, when a Hummer made a fuss and I located her nest right away. It was built in an oak sapling, the top of which was bent over so as to be horizontal, and here, 15 feet from the ground, was the nest. I managed to get a cord over the top of the oak, and hung my hat, full of cotton, underneath to catch the eggs if they tumbled out. Just as the nest came within reach, the cord slipped, the oak jerked up about a foot and away went the eggs. I found them both unharmed on the dead leaves below.

Nuthatches, both species of Tit, Pine Warbler, Gnatcatcher and any other small birds, who build nests where one cannot tell the number of eggs without taking the nest, are always more of a trouble to get full, fresh sets from, than species like the Yellow-breasted Chat, whose nests one can look right into and see how many eggs there are, and then leave if there are not enough.

Another difficulty which I will not enlarge on now, is how to take a desirable nest when found. In some cases, a long reed with the point sharpened comes in handy to poke through the nest and then dislodge it and bring it safe to hand. Miniature grappling hooks attached to the reed also serve the same purpose. Another method is to hang one's hat, filled with cotton, below, and then poke nest and eggs off the limb into the hat. (We have taken several sets this way.)