

On my way home I collected a set of five fresh eggs of the Blue-winged Teal. About half a mile from the scene of my day's work is a small vineyard, of perhaps, one-fourth of an acre, on quite a steep hillside, sloping to the creek. The owner while plowing the vineyard found the nest and, upon my arrival, had them under a setting hen. "Goin' to hatch 'em jest for the curiosity of it," he said. With the aid of a half dollar I soon convinced him that I would deem them a greater curiosity to have them unhatched. The eggs were laid on the ground, in grass about eight inches high and only twelve rods from the owner's house and barn. Directly across the creek from this nest, another one with nine eggs was found, but I did not know of it in time to get the eggs.

June 15th, I again visited the meadow and found sets of fresh eggs of the Marsh Wren, Swamp Sparrow, Sora Rail, Least Bittern and a deserted nest of nine eggs of the Coot, nearly fresh. Four of the eggs had been broken, which was probably the cause of the desertation.

June 22d, I visited Lake Neahtawanta, about twelve miles from here. This lake is a clean sheet of water, containing several hundred acres. Two sides of it are swampy and grown overwith tall grass, cat's-tails, willows and low bushes. Under a scorching sun it was hard work pushing a boat through this; at least my boatman thought so.

This trip enriched my collection with several sets of Least Bittern, Virginia Rail, Red-winged Blackbird—one egg being a runt .55x.43—and one set seven Florida Gallinule.

[Ed.]

THE BLACK SNOWBIRD.

(*Funco hyemalis*.)

WILLARD N. CLUTE, BINGHAMTON, N. Y.

In this part of southern New York, the Black Snowbird does not winter and is therefore seen only for a brief period, while going to their breeding grounds in the Spring and returning in the Fall.

They arrive from the north about the last week in September

and soon become common in the weed growths along old fences. It is like meeting old friends, to see their familiar forms flitting along the roadsides again and coming at this season, when the year is dying and other birds leaving us, they are doubly welcome.

If Burrough's Bluebird, with the hue of the sky upon his back and that of the earth upon his breast, stands for Spring; then the Snowbird may well stand for the opposite season, Autumn; when his plumage matches the lead-grey sky above and the frosty earth beneath and the tail edged with white, hints of the coming snow.

The Snowbird seldom stays with us after the middle of December. At the first snow storm he and his merry companions are off for the south to be seen no more until Spring. Yet they are not always so afraid of cold weather, for I have seen them all Winter along the west branch of the Susquehanna River. They remained in the fields until pressed by the severe cold and then gathered about the house and barn in company with the flocks of English Sparrows.

During the last week in March, the Snowbirds appear from the south. They are generally but little behind the Song Sparrows and often in company with them. When they arrive they are usually found in the tops of pines, but soon become common in the "slashings" and the edges of the woods. At this season they often feed in company with their near relations, the Tree Sparrows, and migrate with them.

That this is one of the most common of American birds, may be inferred from the area covered in their migrations. This extends, according to Wilson, from the Arctic circle to the Gulf of Mexico, and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi Valley. On a journey from northern Maine to Georgia, a distance, as he travelled, of eighteen hundred miles, he found the Snowbird abundant all the way and says, "I cannot but consider this bird as the most numerous of its tribe of any within the United States."

When the birds arrive from the north, they have but a single call note—a smacking chip, like the twang of a bow-string. In the absence of other bird voices the chipping of a company of

these birds, is not unmusical. In the Spring, in addition to their call-note, they have a thrill, resembling that of the Chipping Sparrow, though rather more liquid and musical. The birds are said to have yet another and rarer song, "a faint whispering warble." This is doubtless the bird's love song, which he feels prompted to utter, only when near his Summer home. I suspect we are too far south to hear it.

Some authors maintain that these birds are wary and hard to trap, but my experience is that they are not. When a small lad I often caught them for amusement, letting them go again as soon as caught. They are easily taken by a box held up by a short stick and baited with bread crumbs, the stick being pulled from under the box at the right moment by means of a long string. One Winter's day I caught a whole flock that had made a rendezvous of a haymow. They had access to the place through an open door and when the birds were busily feeding, the door was pulled shut, making them prisoners.

A pair of Snowbirds which were caught and kept all Winter in a large cage, soon became quite tame, but never so fearless as a pair of English Sparrows in an adjoining cage, which were caught at the same time.

The birds ate anything that canaries would and were also fond of bread and milk. In the Spring they became restless and on being liberated, lost no time in joining their friends in the fields.

While most of these birds go beyond the limits of the United States to breed, there are a few that nest within our limits. They commonly breed in the Adirondacks, White Mountains and occasionally in the mountain ranges as far south as the Carolinas. Wilson thought, "there must be something in the blood or constitution of this bird, which unfits it for residing, during the Summer, in the lower parts of the United States. However, he found them abundant in the breeding season about the head waters of the west branch of the Susquehanna and several nests have been found in New York since, in latitude 42.

The nest is usually concealed in a hollow beneath an overhanging bank and is composed of fine grasses, leaves, weed-stalks and pine needles, lined with the hair of cows, horses and other animals.

The eggs are generally four in number, greenish or greyish white, and thinly sprinkled all over with spots of reddish-brown and lilac, thickest at the larger end. Two broods are reared in a season.

In parts of New England, Wilson found the idea prevalent that the Snowbirds turned to Chipping Sparrows in the Summer, the similarity of their song doubtless aiding the belief. It was often a hard task to convince people of their mistake. This idea is akin to the old belief that Swallows turned to frogs in Winter and Chimney Swifts to Snowbuntings.

SOME BIRDS OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS, PA.

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Although it is somewhat of a disappointment to an oologist to encounter a rare nest for the first time and find it occupied by fledgelings, I do not think any of us have wished that we had overlooked such a nest and so avoided the feeling of having lost something of value.

Of course, the enthusiast cannot but regret that he is too late for a coveted set of eggs; but to me the disappointment is not great. To note the actions of an unfamiliar species at its nest, the notes it utters there, whether calls to its young or cries of alarm on the approach of an enemy, are all, to me, deeply interesting and pleasing.

On July Fourth 1890, I was toiling up Mt. Minsi, on the side of the Delaware Water Gap; stopping now and then to take in the actions of a bird, or the grandeur of the scenery. The side of the mountain is thickly covered with deciduous trees and I noticed such birds as the Red-eyed Vireo, Ovenbird, one Black and White Warbler. This last evidently had a nest close by, for I saw it catch a small white moth and fly off with it through the woods.

After climbing upward for an hour, I had not attained the top of the mountain and feeling too warm and tired to go higher, I began to descend. At a point which I judged to be from eight hundred to a thousand feet above the river, an unfamiliar bird-