

## THE BIRDS AT HOME.

I have been surprised at the tameness of wild birds here in our woods. Perhaps you do not know that I am living in the midst of woods, and many of the wood birds are familiar everyday visitors at my door. The outlet from our spring spreads out into shallow pools, and in places just covers the dead leaves with an inch or two of water; across this is a fallen tree—now moss-grown, and a tiny bridge. It makes an ideal bathing place for the birds, and last April and May I spent hours in my hammock watching them, and found it the best place to see them all that could be found.

One day I noticed how close to me a Wood Thrush came, hopping on the ground, and pausing to look at me, but ever coming nearer. Suddenly it picked up a dead leaf and flew with it into a small hemlock about three yards off, and then I discovered that Madame Thrush was building a nest there. After that for two days she worked hard carrying mud and leaves and not minding in the least that I was so near.

A Black-throated Green-back Warbler, in gathering materials for her nest, came right under my hammock (when I was in it) picking up hairs from the horses, which she gathered until she had six or eight, sticking out of her bill both sides, and about four or five inches long. Then twice in flying back and forth to her nest she passed so close to my face that I felt the wind from her wings, and the sound from those tiny wings was like the roar of the wind in the distance. It seemed incredible that so small a creature could make such a commotion.

This little warbler was especially fearless. Once one flew toward me and poised on wing a few inches from me as if to find out what I really was. I saw it do the same thing several times before alighting on a tree. It would hang suspended in the air by the rapid beating of its wings, as a Hummingbird does before a flower.

Many of the other birds who came to bathe paid no attention to me but dressed their feathers in the tree over my head, or just in front of me. One bird alone tried to slip by unseen, or flew away at the slightest movement; this was the Chewink, or Towhee. But the Scarlet Tanager flashed his fire before me recklessly, the Rose-breasted Grosbeak also, and the Thrush, Oven-bird, White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows, Chickadee, Nuthatches, Goldfinch, Indigobird, Phoebe, Pewee, Crested Flycatcher, and many warblers and vireos came daily.

Do you know that nearly all the birds go down for a second dip? Af-

ter one bath and preening the feathers sometime, back they go for another plunge and such spattering and shaking of wings! They bathe just as a canary does in its bath tub.

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## GENERAL NOTES.

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*Somateria dresseri* Sharpe, BREEDING ALONG THE MAINE COAST.—The American Eider formerly nested in considerable numbers along the Maine coast, but of late years they have been sadly reduced in numbers during the breeding season, although they still continue to be common winter residents. In 1895, at least ten pairs of these birds were nesting on various small islands near Isle au Haut. In June, 1896, I again visited the haunts of the Eiders and found evidence of only seven pairs having nested. On a small rocky ledge, covered with a scanty growth of Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum* Michx). I found evidences of there having been three nests, but some fisherman had robbed them of their eggs long before my visit. On another island, visited the same day, I found two nests seemingly ready for eggs, but saw no evidences of the birds in the vicinity. The nests of these birds are, however, readily distinguishable by the down in them, and by being situated on islands not frequented by other ducks, except the Red-breasted Merganser, the nest of which is easily distinguishable.

A few days previous, on June 20th, well over toward Little Duck Island, I had found a nest with a partially incubated set of five eggs of the Eider, and this was the only nest found of this species containing eggs. It was found by flushing the female and was in plain view, being placed on the bare rock, near the point of the island. This was an unusual situation, as the nests of this species found elsewhere were fairly well concealed in the shelter of the various plants growing on the islands. An empty nest found this same day was also well hidden in the midst of a clump of Cow Parsnips. This plant seems to be a favorite hiding place for the nests of Eiders and Red-breasted Mergansers, but the fishermen are keen egg hunters so that the nests of both species are often robbed to form a welcome accession to the larder. It is only a question of a few years when these birds will cease to nest along our coast. Formerly they nested as far west as Muscongus Bay, while now Isle au Haut is their western limit. To the eastward of this they still appear in decimated numbers.