

YOUNG.

It is hatched both blind and naked, remaining in this helpless and callow condition for over a week. It is not known when the white membranous process which extends from either side of the base of the lower mandible disappears, but it probably goes at a very early age. This formation is apparently peculiar to all young Woodpeckers, as suggested by Frank A. Bates in the *Ornithologist and Oologist*, Vol. XVI., p. 35, but its use is unknown. The young are often piled on top of one another, but soon learn to cling to the side of the cavity and avoid too much crowding. On cold or stormy days one of the old birds covers them at intervals, as well as at night, when extremely young. Nearly every one is familiar with the sounds uttered by the unfledged brood, which has been compared to the hissing of a nest full of snakes; as they grow larger, to the winding of a clock; and finally to the click and clatter of a mowing machine. If the tree or stub in which they are situated is pounded, their combined voices increase to a perfect storm of vociferation. Both sexes feed the young with equal assiduity, and up to the time they leave the nest, by the process of regurgitation only. Nuttall appears to have been the first to discover this peculiarity, but when it was more fully commented upon a few years since by Olive Thorn Miller in *Nesting Time*, William Brewster in *Auk*, Vol. X., p. 231, and J. N. Baskett in *Nidologist*, Vol. II., p. 110, it appeared something in the nature of a revelation. Mr. Baskett kindly furnished me with some data relating to the same nest full of young, from which he took the notes for his article in the above magazine, and is substantially the same. The parents appeared to have different places from which to procure food, and were gone at irregular intervals, rarely both present at once. Nothing was ever visible in their mouths, and the regurgitation, while labored, never seemed to indicate that any large portion was being thrown up. The parent drove its

beak down the gaping and screaming throat of the nestling and began a jerking and riggling motion which seemed to tax the efforts of the youngster to hold on, the process lasting for some seconds and seldom repeated at the same visit. As the adults do not remove the excrement, the bottom of the basket-like nest soon becomes foul, but the young manage to keep clean holding tight to the walls by means of their sharp claws, soon creeping to the entrance to peep out on the great world without or to look and listen for the parents, there to receive the food. Thus a period of from two to over three weeks is passed, after which they emerge to spend the day on the tree trunk or large branches, blinking and sunning themselves in the bright light, returning to the security of the chamber on the approach of a storm, threatened danger or return of night; for after all it is their home nest, snug and safe, and by no means the "black hole of Calcutta" imagined. In a few more days the adults, by means of much beseeching, encouraging and threatening language, persuade one after another to try its wings, and short flights are made from limb to limb and tree to tree amid much excitement and flurry. Prof. Jones says that the ability to fly seems to be an individual characteristic, some being able to do so much earlier than others of the same brood. They depend on the food, small fruit and ants mainly, brought them by the old birds for some time after departing from the home-tree, and are supplied with a small quantity of gravel (grinders) before leaving the nest. Apparently the juvenile makes its first essay to supply its own wants while on the ground, as nearly all June and July specimens were shot from that position. The tongue of the nestling is harmless; just when the barb appears I am unable to say. One bird over a week out of its nest had not developed it. Mr. Baskett says that in the fall the young of a family keep well together.