

THE FLIGHT SONG OF THE KENTUCKY WARBLER.—The following letter entitled "A Woodland Mystery" was clipped from a Chester County, (Pennsylvania) newspaper last fall:

"Editor *News* :—For three Summers a little bird that sings on the wing has concealed its identity from me.

Its favorite time seems to be just at twilight, when it will swing out from the side of the wood which is close by our door, and after a short semi-circular flight, accompanied by a brief song, will dive among the trees and remain perfectly quiet.

I have heard it early in the morning and again by 3 p. m., but it sings chiefly at about dark, and this, with its manner of doing so, makes it very difficult to indentify.

Only a small percentage of our birds sing in flight, among them the Ovenbird, and as we have a number of these near, and I was not familiar with their air song, I was inclined to put the responsibility on them, but I thought I once caught a gleam of yellow as the singer slid among the trees, and twice I fancied the air song began and changed into the common song of the Kentucky Warbler.

At last, and probably nearly the last time it sang this season, as it closes its programme about the middle of July, I got a sufficiently near and clear view to satisfy me that it was the Kentucky.

The bird is not very common here, or rather, it seems to be quite rare for a series of years and then more plentiful for a while. It is about the size of our Vireos, with bright yellow breast and black markings on the sides of its head, in fact it looks very much like an enlarged copy of the Maryland Yellow throat.

It has nested and raised its young near us for several years, and a part of the time its common day song, sounding like pretty, pretty, pretty, is, perhaps, the most noticeable and constant one to be heard. But so shy is it with its air song that it has taken me three seasons to make sure of it.

EDWARD SWAYNE.

FOOD AND GRAVEL.—In collecting a series of skins of the Song Sparrow, I was struck with the large amount of gravel

found in their stomachs in comparison with those of some members of other families. For instance the Robin which is a common winter resident here, some ten or twelve stomachs examined contained little gravel; they are filled with everything like an insect that can be found, more particularly a small white larva which they seem to pull out of the ground but which I have not been able to find in the very places where they have been feeding. Where the old "turned out" fields have been burned over, the Robins are the most plentiful and there they seem to find most of their food. The stomachs appear to contain more dirt than gravel, although a small amount of sand or gravel is evident.

Of course the Song Sparrow is a hard-billed bird and it not only swallows a much larger amount of gravel in proportion to its size in comparison with the Robin, but it is particular to the kind it takes into its stomach. Those that I have taken this season have been secured in low marshy ground adjoining streams. In these little streams, often mere ditches, is found small white gravel mixed with the gravel of a dark brown color, and the white gravel is invariably found in the gizzards of these little birds. Of course the reason is obvious why a seed-eating bird requires more grinders than one that is purely insectivorous, but what is the virtue of the white gravel alone?

Another thing I have noticed is that birds like many other bipeds "only scratch for a living when necessity make scratching compulsory." Mockingbirds, Catbirds and Brown Thrashers though insectivorous, will simply move into a wild cherry tree or a place where the berries of the pokeweed are ripening, and stay until everything in the fruit line is consumed. An examination shows that few or no insects are found in their stomachs at this time, and the underparts of their tails are stained with the juices of the fruit, being plainly seen when they take flight. It is a common saying of the negroes of the South when speaking of a man when drunk that "his face looks like a Catbird's tail in pokeberry time."

ROBERT WINDSOR SMITH, *Kirkwood, Ga.*

VERNANCULAR ORNITHOLOGY OF DELAWARE.—When business called me to the Southern border of Kent County,