

A MIDNIGHT SINGING CATBIRD

A short time ago I heard, for the first time, a Catbird's midnight song. It occurred to me as being so unusual that I made a note of it.

I returned home just at midnight on this occasion, and was in the act of running my car into the garage, when the Catbird's song came to me. The bird was singing in some trees not far away and, although it had rained a little earlier in the evening, the moon was shining at the time. It seemed to me that it sang with all the enthusiasm that characterizes its daylight repertoire, but of that I could not be entirely certain. The notes were interspersed with the usual *meus* of the Catbird.

FRED J. PIERCE.

Winthrop, Iowa, June 6, 1922.

A GOLDFINCH'S PRICKLY HOME

In going through my 1920 notes I find the following paragraph, on the Goldfinch's nesting, which may be of interest to readers of the Wilson Bulletin:

"While cutting a patch of bull thistles in the latter part of August I discovered a Goldfinch's nest in one of the largest ones. The nest was placed in a crotch formed by the prickly branches and contained five eggs. Though an unsightly object, to say the least, the big thistle was allowed to stand, and a watch was kept of the nest. Three eggs hatched August 27 and the remaining two August 28. The thistle probably provided a good place in which to build a nest, but as a safe home it was almost a failure. On windy days the young were tossed about in much the same manner as the crew of a rowboat would be on the ocean. On several extremely windy days there was constant danger of the youthful mariners all being thrown out of their pitching ship, and to relieve my own mind, as well as theirs, I firmly anchored the thistle to the ground with a cord. Three young left the nest September 11 and the other two left it the following day. This seemed to me a rather late nesting date for the Goldfinch."

FRED J. PIERCE.

Winthrop, Iowa.

[In 1899 I found a nest of Goldfinches in a patch of bull thistles on September 4, near Grinnell, Iowa. This nest contained four fresh eggs on that date. In twelve days the eggs were hatched, and after two weeks in the nest the young were strong enough to leave the nest and its vicinity.—Ed.]

A MID-APRIL BLIZZARD AND ITS EFFECT ON BIRD-LIFE

Unseasonable snowstorms probably cause more discomfort to bird-life than any other element our migrating birds are forced to face. The birds' sense of migration tells them when their northern homes are ready for them and they hasten there, but occasionally the weather man plays a contemptible trick by changing the order of things, and the birds have to suffer.

This was what happened in this part of Iowa in mid-April, 1921. It rained all day April 15, and that evening, with much hard thunder and

lightning as a curtain-raiser, it commenced snowing, and continued through the night; all the next day we were in the grip of an old-fashioned Iowa blizzard. It was worse than any storm we had received during the preceding winter. With snow nearly a foot deep on the level, drifts three to six feet deep a common occurrence, and in the blinding snow as well (which was very wet), the birds were in a poor position to secure food.

Early on the morning of the blizzard, April 16, a number of Prairie Horned Larks, with a few Vesper Sparrows and Slate-colored Juncos, came about our farm buildings in their apparently unsuccessful search for food. I gathered up several shovels of hayseed from the barn floor and scattered it upon the nearby snow. They began working on it at once and could hardly be driven away from it. Of course, it was soon buried by the snow, but by replenishing the supply frequently, they had food most of the day.

That afternoon I made a survey of a nearby wood to ascertain to what extent the blizzard was affecting bird-life. Robins were humped up in the trees and bushes. A Black-crowned Night Heron, snow-bound, sat dejectedly in a tall tree. I saw a Vesper Sparrow with a large chunk of snow stuck to its tail, which by its weight rendered that member practically useless. My greatest surprise came when I found a number of Myrtle Warblers. During the period that I have kept migration records I have never known them to appear before the latter part of April, but the advanced spring doubtless accounted for their early arrival. Though their plumage was wet and ruffled, they twittered cheerfully as they searched for food among the fascicles of fresh tamarack leaves, quite unmindful of the snow that fell heavily all around them. Kinglets worked by their side.

That night Robins, Phœbes, and Vesper Sparrows came in through the open doors of the log-house and wood-house to seek protection for the night.

The next day, Sunday, April 17, dawned bright and fair and in a short time the sun had restored the snow-covered world to a more cheerful state. The green earth eventually appeared and the birds went about their duties with their accustomed vigor, apparently none the worse for their brief exposure to one of Iowa's extremely rare mid-April blizzards.

FERD J. PIERCE.

Winthrop, Iowa, April 18, 1921.

WILSON THRUSH IN ASHTABULA COUNTY, OHIO

On May 7 of the present year I saw the first Wilson Thrush noted for the season. On May 21 I wandered further than usual and entered a thick swampy underbrush, in the township of Plymouth, Ashtabula County, Ohio.

The day was fine. I became tired with my long walk and sat down to rest on an old log near a small pond of water. An abundance of birds were to be seen. Presently the stillness was broken by the sweetest bird music I have ever heard. It was a Wilson Thrush perched on a mossy