

that they would come and rid us of our trouble. Last year they were in the lower end of the valley, and this year they came back again in July, coming up the river almost to the state line.

Although they were to be found almost everywhere, they seemed to have a preference for the new-mown fields of alfalfa, where grasshoppers and other insects were most plentiful. Scattered as they would be over great fields, their white plumage contrasting against the vivid green of the hay made a most beautiful picture. They also delighted in newly plowed fields, where some would follow the plow, walking in the furrow while looking for choice grubs or even mice. On the plowed ground they would pay no attention to the horses until they were almost up to them, when they would fly a short distance and settle again.

I delighted in watching them as they skimmed above the alfalfa or beet tops after small flying insects, or as they came straggling up the river early in the morning in many small scattered groups, because their flight was so easy and graceful, the very poetry of motion. They stayed until late in October so that I had many chances to observe them, both in flight and on the ground. They usually flew quite low so that their soft blue-gray mantles and black heads were easily seen, even without field glasses, and when they would circle just above the village the children, and even older persons, would grow quite excited, and you would see people everywhere out on the sidewalks watching them. Their great numbers has created a local interest in bird study that just our common birds could not have produced.—MRS. J. W. HALL, *Mitchell, Nebr.*

The Re-use of Old Nest Material by the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Ruby-throated Hummingbird.—Soon after I began studying birds I made a collection of nests of the species that were commonly found near my home at Eubank, in south central Kentucky. My usual procedure was to take the nests soon after the young birds had left them. I soon learned that to secure the nests of the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliotila caerulea caerulea*) and Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) it was necessary to collect them as soon as they were deserted, for when they were left any length of time they either disappeared altogether or were so badly torn to pieces that they were worthless for my collection.

On May 28, 1889, I learned what becomes of the Gnatcatchers' nests. I had gone to the woods to collect a nest that had been located on April 26, at which time the bird was incubating. The nest was about thirty-five feet up, on a limb of a Red Maple. I climbed almost to the base of the limb, and was within twelve feet of the nest, when I paused to catch breath. In less than a minute a female Blue-gray Gnatcatcher came to the nest, and, with much twittering, began to pull lichens from it. As soon as she had a bill full of the lichens she flew away to the south. I waited, and soon she returned for another load, going with it in the same direction. This time I slid down the tree and followed her, and soon found the new nest. I have no means of knowing whether the new nest was a second one of the same pair that built the first nest, or was the work of a different pair. Since then I have seen these birds carrying material from an old nest several times, the last time being last spring, when an early nest was carried away soon after the young birds had left it.

I have no written record of having seen the Ruby-throated Hummingbird carrying away material from an old nest, but have a distinct recollection of having seen it doing so in at least one instance, a number of years ago. The fact that

nests of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird usually disappear very soon after the young birds have flown, strongly suggests that, like the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, these tiny feathered rainbows use material from old nests in the construction of new ones.—JOHN B. LEWIS, *Lawrenceville, Va.*

Bob-white a True and Faithful Father.—On the sixth of September a farmer friend came to me and told me of a nest of Bob-whites along the roadside near the edge of the timber, and on account of the late date I decided to give this nest careful observation and watch the results of such a late nesting. When I approached the nest on September 6, I found the mother bird carefully brooding her twelve white eggs, just five feet from the wheel tracks of the road, in a nest which was so carefully arched over that she was quite well concealed. She was of exactly the same color as the surrounding dead grass, which had recently been mowed, the sickle bar having passed just over her head, not missing her over an inch.

I visited this nest daily, and each time I found conditions the same, with the mother bird patiently brooding. But she would always flush upon my approach and would not allow me to get her photograph. On September 15, just nine days after my first visit, upon approaching the nest we observed a mass of brown feathers in front of the nest, and "Old Bobbie" himself was brooding the eggs, or rather eleven of them, as one had been rolled out of the nest and lay near by. The mother bird had been killed and devoured some time during the night, and nothing remained but a lot of her feathers. The eggs, however, had been spared, and our old faithful friend Bobbie had now undertaken the job of raising a family, which sometimes is the lot of a lone widower. He was a great deal more shy than the mother bird had been, and I could not approach nearly as close to him before he would flush. I would have given a great deal to have secured a good photograph of him on those eggs, but I did not have the heart to set up a blind and wait for him to return, as is customary. I was afraid that he would not return, and I wanted so much to have him complete the job which he had started.

I continued my daily visits to this nest, each trip requiring eight miles of country driving. On the afternoon of September 21, I found that one egg had hatched nicely, and there were eleven whole eggs remaining in the nest with the two half shells, but neither the chick nor "Old Bobbie" were anywhere to be seen, so I presumed that he was away in the grass somewhere giving his little son his first lesson in catching grasshoppers. That night it rained all night, and the next forenoon was so cloudy and wet that I could not get to the nest until in the afternoon. When I drew near I found that all that remained was a lot of empty shells, as every egg had hatched during that night of rain and "Old Bobbie" had gotten away with every chick without me so much as seeing one of them, much less getting a photograph.

I knew that birds of this kind take to the grass as soon as hatched, but I hardly thought that the entire dozen would get away during a rain without me seeing one of them, and I only away from them for about twenty hours. I had secured a good photograph of the nest and twelve eggs on September 6, one of the mass of feathers with the nest in the background on September 15, and one of the nest and empty shells on September 22, and I will have to content myself with them. However, the experience gained by watching this tragedy and the