

BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY

Conducted by Alfred M. Bailey

Springtime, summer, fall, and winter have their attractions for the nature lover, and the bird photographer who confines his efforts to the vicinity of his home will have many opportunities for excellent pictures. It is not necessary to travel far afield, for there are interesting subjects always at hand—the migrants of early spring, the nesting birds of early summer, the young and adults of early fall, and the stragglers from the north in mid-winter. The nesting season is the best time, of course, for then the adult birds take kindly to a blind; they return to their nests to feed the young without fear of the blind or the clicking camera, and the photographer may work on a single family until the young leave the nest.

Many interesting hours may be spent in a blind, and many valuable life history notes secured. It is surprising how little is known about the family life of many of our birds, as a brief inspection of the literature on a given species will show. The food habits are well worked out for the majority of common birds, but the number of feedings a day, quantities of food consumed, aggressiveness of the young in securing food—and even the incubation period are subjects worth studying.

The best photographs will be made by the one working near home, where the "victim" may be observed and photographed at all favorable opportunities. The casual visitor on an "expedition" can not hope to compete with the one working in his own "backyard"; he can secure the high lights and make interesting photographic records, to be sure, but he will be unable to make the valuable notes and life history photographs that will be secured by the one who lives in the vicinity. I know this is true, from my own experience, for I have been a hit-and-miss camera shooter for a long time, having made pictures in many parts of the country—but not until I tried working in my own neighborhood did I appreciate the difference between studying a pair of birds and working with them from the time the eggs were laid until the young left the nest, and the hurried work I had done on various field trips. I not only found that the opportunities for photography were endless, but that I had the time to learn something about the habits of the species under observation. It is with regret that I view my work of the past fifteen years—the realization of the number of birds which I have seen through the ground glass, and photographed, and then passed by without learning anything worth while.

Last year I worked with the motion picture camera on birds which nested within six miles of my house. It was real backyard photography, for I could reach the blinds in a short time. Daily visits were made to such species as the Red-shouldered Hawk, King Rail, Least Bittern, Upland and Piping Plovers; and interesting notes and photographs were made. Even a Robin in a neighbor's grape arbor was available for study, and after the season's work, I was amazed at the number of photographs secured. I then realized the abundance of camera material available for any bird photographer, for, if I could secure material to photograph within a metropolitan district of over three million people, others more fortunately situated must have greater opportunities. And—I must hasten to add, the results I obtained leave much to be desired, and another season's work upon the species would be well spent.—ALFRED M. BAILEY, *Chicago Academy of Sciences*.



Photographs of the Robin by Alfred M. Bailey.