The Blue Book of Birds of America

A BIRD GUIDE

Containing the following orders of birds: Goatsuckers, Swifts, etc. Perching Birds—including the Tyrant Flycatchers, Larks, Crows and Jays, Starlings, Icteridae, and Finches. « « « « «

Miss Joyce Bifet

BIRD GUIDE

The Three Books in this series:

The Red Book consisting of orders of Diving Birds, Swimmers, Herons, Storks, Ibises, Marsh Dwellers, Shore Birds, Pigeons and Doves, Birds of Prey, Cuckoos, Woodpeckers.

The Blue Book containing the orders of Goatsuckers, Swifts, etc., and Perching Birds including the Tyrant Flycatchers, Larks, Crows and Jays, Starlings, Icteridae and Finches.

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THE BLUE BOOK
of
BIRDS OF AMERICA

by

FRANK G. ASHBROOK

Illustrations by PAUL MOLLER

This is One of a Series of Three Books

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PREFACE

Birds are beautiful and graceful creatures. Not only do birds satisfy our esthetic sense through their handsome plumage and their sweet voices, but they are marvelously adapted to their respective fields of activity. They are a valuable asset because they depend largely for their food on insects which are injurious to plant life. No other creatures are so well fitted to capture flying insects as swallows, swifts, and night hawks. The wrens, trim of body and agile of movement, creep in and out of the holes and crevices and explore rubbish heaps for hidden insects. The woodpecker, whose whole body exhibits wonderful adaptation of means to end, is provided with strong claws for holding firmly when at work, a chisel-like bill driven by powerful muscles to dig out insects and drag forth the concealed larvae safe from other foes. The game birds furnish sport for great numbers of people who love to go afield with dog and gun. Certain kinds of game birds such as quail, pheasants and ducks are raised in considerable numbers on preserves and on farms for commercial purposes.

This book is designed to furnish some knowledge of birds and to encourage more interest in their habits. Sixty-four birds that inhabit various parts of the country are described. A colored illustration of each is given so as to enable the reader to identify the bird. The descriptions of the birds are necessarily brief, but they are believed to be sufficient to acquaint the reader with the most prominent characteristics.

Special acknowledgment is due the Bureau of Biological Survey, the National Association of Audubon Societies and the American Ornithological Union for the liberal use which has been made of their publications. Much material has also been taken from the two volumes entitled "Birds of New York."

Every picture represents a male of the species, the measuremcnts being given from the tip of bill to tip of tail.

WHIP-POOR-WILL

(Antrostomus vociferus vociferus)

Length, 9½ inches

The whip-poor-wills and the nighthawks belong to the family of the "goatsuckers," a most unusual name for birds. In Europe the people believed that these birds lived by milking the goats, a superstition that came no doubt from the sight of the birds flying close to the goats in the twilight to feed on the numerous insects surrounding them. The goatsuckers have small weak feet but strong, well-developed wings. Their main food consists of insects, and in the twilight most of their time is spent flying about, sweeping up the insects from the air, but during the day they rest much of the time. Though often heard these birds are rarely seen except at twilight when they utter their peculiar rhythmic calls. The whip-poor-will is named after its call note. The male can be distinguished from the female by a white breast band, that of the female being buff colored. The whip-poor-will does not make a nest, but lays two eggs on the ground or on other flat surfaces.

WHIP-POOR-WILL

POOR-WILL

POOR-WILL

(Phalaenoptilus nuttali nuttali)

Length, 7½ inches

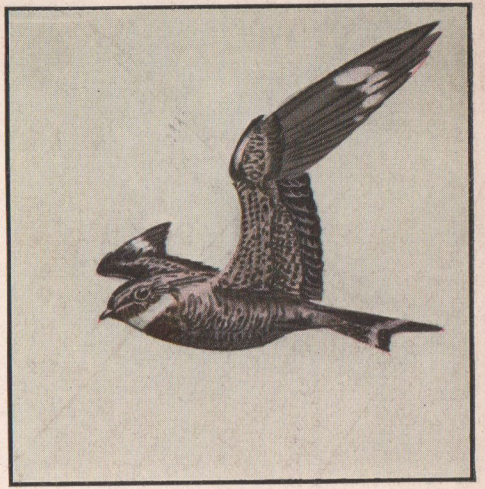
In suitable places through the high semi-desert regions of the Southwest the poor-will is to be heard, though not frequently seen. The sudden cry of *poor-will, poor-will,* is a call mournful enough, and would seem like a voice from the spirit world. It may be heard at dusk as the bird flies about after a day of rest on the ground. The poor-will resembles the whip-poor-will in shape and color but it is smaller. Nature has furnished it with an excellent camouflage, for its frosted gray plumage so harmonizes with its surroundings as almost to conceal the bird even when in plain sight. The female differs from the male only in having narrow buff tips to the outer tail feathers instead of the broad white ones that adorn the coat of the male. The poor-will captures its prey of various insects by short flights, in much the same manner employed by the whip-poor-will. Its two white-spotted eggs are usually laid on the bare ground without any attempt at nest building.

NIGHTHAWK

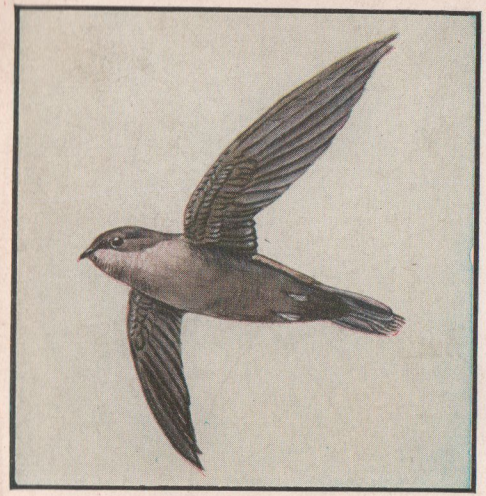
(Chordeiles virginianus virginianus)

Length, 10 inches

The nighthawk is another member of the goatsucker family and is somewhat like the whip-poor-will in form, detail of color, and markings. Its call is a nasal *pent, peent.* During the twilight hours this bird can be seen making high dives from far up in the sky. When it almost reaches the tree-tops, it spreads its wings, checks its descent, and glides gracefully upward again, only to repeat its high-diving stunt. When seen from below the nighthawk seems to have a hole in its wings, an effect that is produced by a very conspicuous white mark across the outer wing quills. The male nighthawk has a white breast band and a white band in the tail, a marking that is missing in the female, which has the throat buff. Like the whip-poor-will, the nighthawk nests on the ground but lays its eggs in the fields or on pebbly roofs. The nighthawk winters in the tropics and starts north in April. In summer, it dwells in the territory from the Gulf States north to Canada and Alaska.



NIGHTHAWK



CHIMNEY SWIFT

CHIMNEY SWIFT

(Chaetura pelagica)

Length, 5½ inches

Who has not been thrilled by the sight of vast numbers of chimney swifts circling about in the evening, and finally all of them seeking nesting places in some tall chimney? These swifts never perch on branches of trees, as apparently they can not grasp a branch with their feet in such way as to maintain a fixed position on it. They possess great endurance and spend much of their time frolicking on the wing. The nest is built in the chimney and is a bracketlike construction of twigs, cemented to the bricks by the birds' saliva. Though the habits of the birds are similar to those of the swallow, it is in reality more nearly related to the humming bird than to our barn swallows and purple martins. The range of this bird covers the entire region of eastern North America. It winters in Central America and reaches the Gulf States in March on its northward journey.

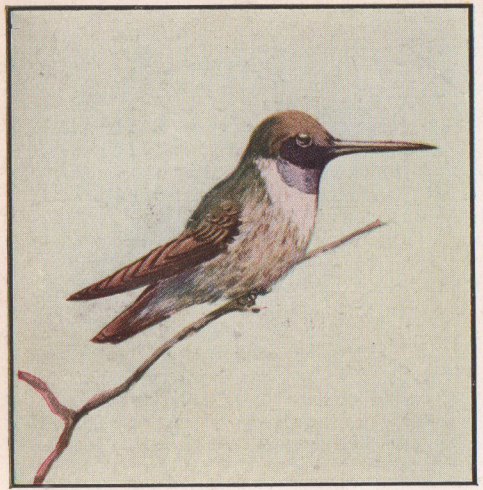
RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD

(Archilochus colubris)

Length, 3¼ inches

As is implied by its name, the ruby-throated hummingbird has a throat band of beautiful red feathers, that is, the mature male bird has. It also has a rather long, spiked tail and a green coat tinged with brown, but the tail of the female is shorter and the breast feathers are gray. Both birds have long slender bills. Family ties rest lightly on the male, for after the eggs are laid, he deserts his mate, leaving to her the task of incubation and the care and up-bringing of the young. From its perch on the limbs of trees and bushes, the hummingbird makes frequent trips to near-by feeding grounds only to return shortly and resume its usual occupation of alternately preening its feathers and gazing about. The nest is one of the most exquisite homes in the bird world and is placed, saddle fashion, on a limb, usually fifteen feet or more above the ground, and in it two white bean-like eggs are laid in May.

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD



BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD

BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD

(Archilochus alexandri)

Length, 3 ¾ inches

The black-chinned hummingbird inhabits only the western United States. So slim and compact is this bird that, seen at the usual distance, its plumage has more the appearance of metal-work than of feathers. The neck is relatively long, and the bill is long and slender. The top feathers are a rather dull metallic bronze-green. The wings are a dark brownish slate color. One usually sees this bird whiz from flower to flower like a large bright bee, pausing before the flowers to capture a bug or to sip their nectar. This feat shows the bird's marvelous skill in the use of its wings and tail. It also feeds freely on insects.

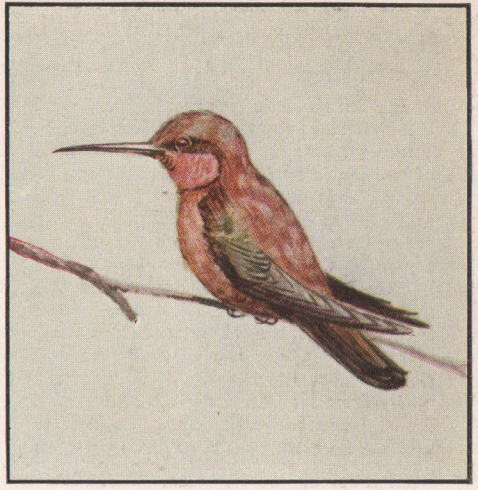
The female builds the nest unaided, the male taking no part in the building operations. The little structure is situated on a horizontal limb or in the fork of small twigs and is frequently constructed of the down found on the lower side of the leaves of sycamore trees. It resembles a small round yellow sponge, but is large enough to hold two small, pure white eggs.

RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD

(Selasphorus rufus)

Length, 3 7/10 inches

A characteristic of hummingbirds is the flashing beauty of plumage that long ago led to calling them gems of the air. This is due mainly to the quality of the feathers, upon the surface of which are small scales that reflect the light in prismatic hues, giving iridescent or metallic sheens to certain parts, especially to the throat. Such brilliance, however, belongs only to the males, the females being uniformly more plainly dressed, though still highly colored. The crown of the rufous hummingbird is dull metallic bronze or bronze green, the rest of the upperparts are plain cinnamon rufous, and the back is sometimes glossed with metallic bronze-green. The chin and the throat are a brilliant metallic scarlet. The nest, made of willow-floss and soft plant down covered with lichens, is found in ferns, bushes, trees, and vines near streams. Two small, pure white eggs are laid.



RUFOUS HUMMINGBIRD

KINGBIRD

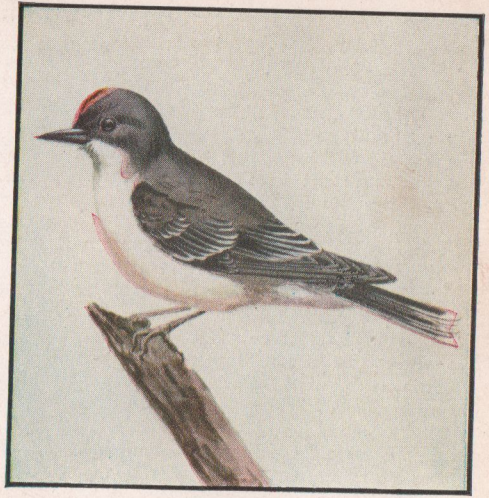
(Tyrannus tyrannus)

Length, 8 inches

The kingbird is a perching bird and belongs also to the flycatcher family. The regal bearing of this minor monarch of the air is probably responsible for its name. It is noted for its valiant defense of its home. Upon the approach of an enemy it utters a sharp chattering war cry and takes the offensive at once. Fearlessly the kingbird dives at a foe many times its size, usually causing the invader to beat a hasty and inglorious retreat. This bird is an industrious and skillful flycatcher, and its skill comes partly from its habit of perching on dead limbs, tree-tops, fence posts, or similar points of vantage from which to get an unobstructed view of at least the immediate surroundings. The kingbird often shows a preference for living near streams or lakes but is very often found far away from these places. In the northern states it is found in old apple orchards, along highways, or in the neighborhood of farm-fences where bushes and small trees have been allowed to grow. The male bird, brownish gray in color, has an orange-crested head and a broad fan-shaped tail, the feathers of which are tipped with white. The female also has the orange crest but her tail is narrower than that of her mate and is not white tipped. The breast feathers are gray. Young birds of the species lack the orange crest. The kingbird seems to spend most of its time in hunting food. It perches as a rule on the highest branch of some small tree, telegraph-pole or fence and remains motionless except for

Kingbird—Continued

frequently turning its head as it searches the air for insects. Then suddenly it flies out, sometimes many feet, seizes the insect and then returns to its perch. This flycatcher eats mosquitoes and practically all other insects that come within its reach are destroyed. The kingbird has sharp eyes and can see insects at a greater distance than man, in fact it has been proven that this bird can see an insect at a distance of one hundred feet. Kingbirds usually build their nests about twenty feet above the ground in trees and near the ends of the branches. From three to five eggs, white, spotted with brown, are laid in May. These birds are found in all parts of North America in summer. Kingbirds fly in loose flocks when migrating. They winter in South America and arrive in Florida in March on their journey to their northern summer home.



KINGBIRD

ARKANSAS KINGBIRD

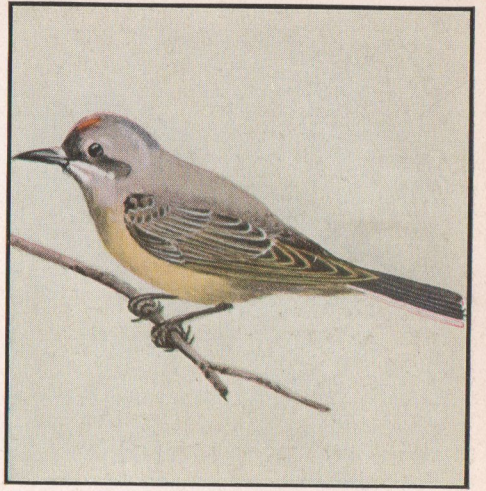
(Tyrannus verticalis)

Length, 9 inches

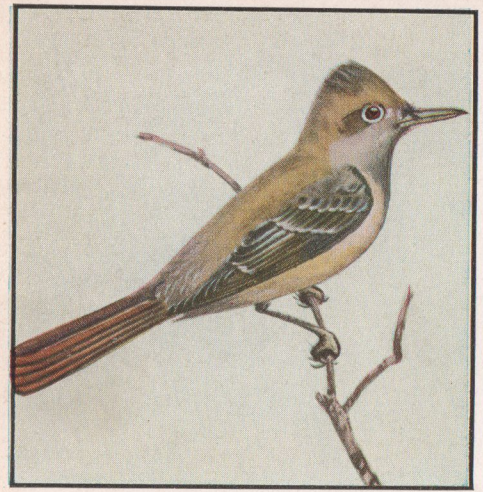
The Arkansas kingbird is even more noisy and pugnacious than the eastern members of the tryant flycatcher family. It is abundant in the country west of the Mississippi River, where it is more often and more appropriately called the western kingbird. When one enters its domain, he notices that the Arkansas kingbird always keeps itself very much in evidence. Whatever this bird undertakes to do, it seems to think it important to make a lot of noise about it. This flycatcher is fearless in its attacks on hawks, crows, and owls and actually alights on their backs as they fly, and does them all the injury it can with its beak and claws. Its attacks on its enemies are accompanied by incessant screaming and also when it flies from a perch to capture an insect, it is likely to announce its success by a shriek. Like the other kingbirds, its food consists largely of moths, butterflies, ants, grasshoppers, crickets, and other insects, most of which are caught on the wing, for, as with the other flycatchers, this bird is an expert at food-gathering while in flight.

The Arkansas kingbird loves the open country and avoids forests. Hilly sections with frequent trees for nesting sites seem to be the most favored locations. It is not shy of human beings, however, and frequently lives in gardens and about buildings, often placing its nest in structures built by man. Nests of the western kingbird have been found as far north as British Columbia during the summer but

the species retire entirely from the United States in winter. Minnesota, Kansas, and Texas are on eastern border of its range although stragglers have been seen at points farther east. What little vegetable food is eaten by this bird is of small economic value. Insects harmful to crops form its chief source of food. The nest is large and clumsy. It is made of paper, rags, twigs, rootlets, and grasses, placed in all sorts of locations, often in eave troughs and above windows. The eggs, from three to four in number, are creamy white, spotted with brown. This bird has been accused of eating honey bees and it has been said that it loiters about the hives snapping up the honey-laden bees as they return from the field. This accusation is not borne out by actual facts. On the whole the Arkansas kingbird is one of the most useful birds in the region where it is found.



ARKANSAS KINGBIRD



CRESTED FLYCATCHER

CRESTED FLYCATCHER

(Myiarchus crinitus)

Length, 8½ inches

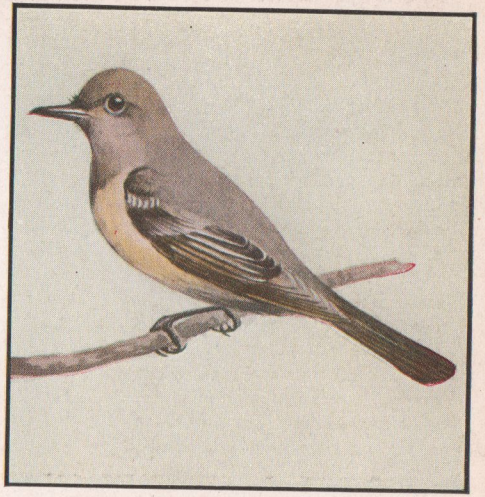
Always lining its nest with the cast-off skin of a snake is one of the characteristic habits of the crested cousin of the kingbird, the crested flycatcher. Its call resembles an exclamatory whistle and sounds like a shout. The female shares these peculiarities. The eggs, marked with long, dark-brown streaks, are unlike those of any other of its feathered relatives, near or distant. These eggs are laid in a hole in a tree in May or June. Usually, the tail of the crested flycatcher is reddish brown. The crest also is generally evident. The feathers on the back are lighter in hue than those of the kingbird, but the tail feathers are of a darker shade of brownish gray. There is no throat band, and the under side of the body is yellow, shading into light gray. After a winter in the tropics, these birds fly north, arriving in Florida in March and then spread out, gradually, over eastern North America, building nests everywhere from Florida to Canada.

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER

(Myiarchus cinerascens)

Length, 8 inches

In the far West, the land of wide open spaces, dwells the ash-throated flycatcher, which, like the nighthawk, is a bird of the open country. Seeming to assume a dignified air, with raised crest and erect carriage, it pursues its business in a quiet, self-contained manner. The throat and chest are of a pale ash color, the throat sometimes almost white. The underparts are a pale sulphur yellow, and the upperparts grayish brown. It shows a special liking for abandoned ranches and it likes to build its nest in the buildings where it can forage in the orchards and about the deserted gardens and cattle pens. Among its favorite nesting places are holes abandoned by the woodpeckers and other cavities. Fruit and seeds are the principal vegetable foods eaten by the ash-throat. Numerous harmful insects and a few useful ones are included in its animal-food menu. The bird is found in that section of the West extending from the Pacific to Texas and Colorado and as far north as the state of Washington.



ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER

PHOEBE

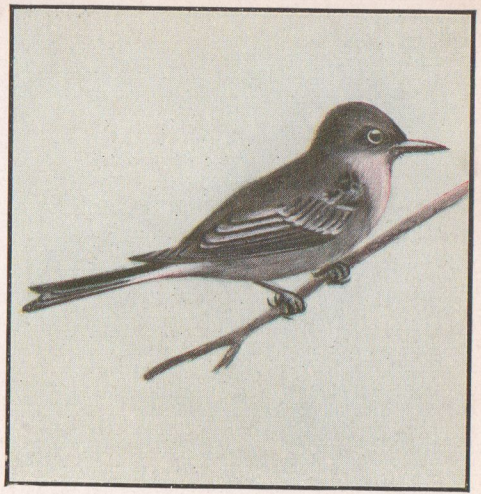
(Sayornis phoebe)

Length, 7 inches

Smaller in body, but with its head slightly crested, the phoebe resembles in a general way its cousins, the kingbird and the crested flycatcher. Its top coat is gray, and the head usually is somewhat darker than the body. The underside of the body is light gray, tinged with yellow. The phoebe is the best-known member of a group of small flycatchers, all of which are much alike in structure and plumage. Each, however, has a call that is peculiarly its own and one that is easily recognized. The phoebe's *pewit-phoebe,* plainly sounded, as the bird wags its tail in friendly fashion, establishes its identity at once. This bird is no musician, in fact its two-syllabled call, which suggests impatience, becomes monotonous when frequently repeated. The nest is constructed of mud, grass, and vegetable fibers, and is lined with hair, grass, and feathers, and nearly always decorated with green moss. From four to six eggs are laid, usually all white, but sometimes they are marked with a few brown spots. Laying time is the latter half of April, soon after the phoebe family returns from its winter home in the region extending from South Carolina to Mexico. Very often two broods of young are raised in the same year. In such cases the nest is rarely used the second time. Sometimes the phoebe will take possession of the abandoned nest of a bird of another species like the barn swallow or a robin. The

Phoebe—Continued

phoebe's confiding and gentle ways have won the real affection of its human neighbors, who should also realize as well that it is a very useful destroyer of harmful insects. Few birds are greater insect eaters. In its pursuit of its prey it shows all the speed and skill characteristic of flycatchers. It lies in wait for its prey on some dead limb or stake. Here it will sit, frequently jerking its tail and calling in an impatient way until some insect comes flying along. Then out it darts, seizes its prey in its beak and flies back to its perch. The phoebe is the only member of the flycatcher tribe to winter in the eastern part of the United States and, therefore, is the first to arrive in the spring. During the nesting period its range extends from northwestern Georgia and northern Mississippi to Canada; in fact it may be found over most of eastern North America.



PHOEBE

SAY'S PHOEBE

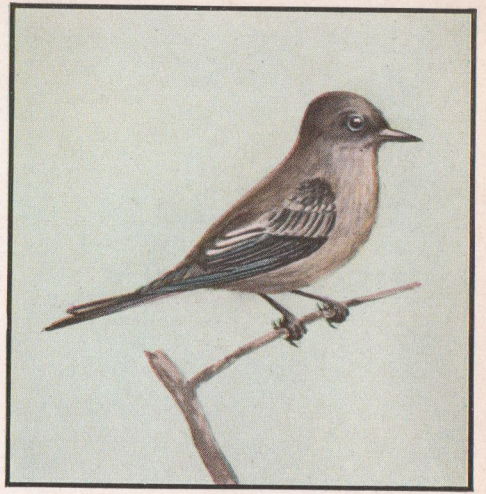
(Sayornis sayus)

Length, 7½ inches

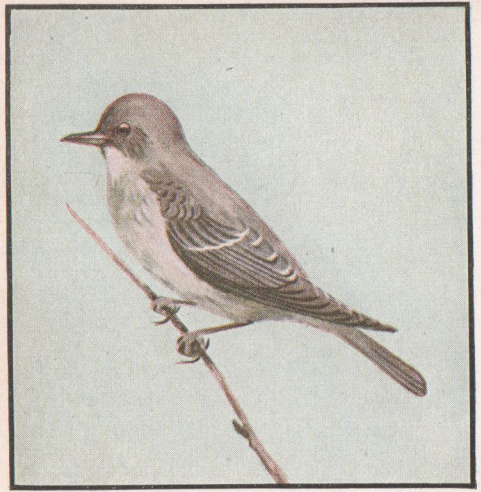
The Say's phoebe, commonest of the western flycatchers, resembles somewhat in manners its cousin, the phoebe of the eastern states. In rocky canyons it may be seen perched on boulders and darting out after passing insects. Say's phoebe is a true flycatcher and has also been seen to catch good-sized grasshoppers on the wing. Its diet is composed almost wholly of insects taken on the wing and in common with other members of its family (as well as the hawks and the owls) it ejects from its mouth, in the form of pellets, the hard and indigestible parts of its food. Though it eats some useful insects, its work on the whole is beneficial so far as its relation to man and his works are concerned. Like the eastern phoebe, it also shows an attachment for the home site it has once used, and will return to build its nest in the same general locality and even in the same spot. The western bird seems rather more nervous and restless than the eastern, in that it is more active in flitting its tail and raising its crest. The Say's phoebe or pewee, as it is sometimes called, is described as follows: The upperparts are brownish-gray and the underparts buffy-gray and cinnamon brown. The crown and backpart of the neck are decidedly darker; uppertail coverts, dusky gray and margined in paler color. The tail is brownish-black and the outer web of lateral feathers edged with white; wings deep brown and

Say's Phoebe—Continued

pale brown; sides of head and neck, similar in color to upper portions, changing gradually below into pale buff or brown of chin and throat; chest and sides of breast, light buff brown; rest of underparts, cinnamon-buff; bill black. The eggs of the phoebe are four or five in number, almost pure white in color and sometimes specked with brown. Its note is a plaintive two-syllabled utterance, somewhat like that of the eastern wood pewee. There is another western phoebe named the black phoebe. The black and white of its plumage are sharply contrasted and some people consider it the handsomest of the flycatchers. Bugs in various forms, flies, moths, and caterpillars complete its menu. Throughout its range, it is welcomed and protected.



SAY'S PHOEBE



WOOD PEWEE

WOOD PEWEE

(Myiochanes virens)

Length, 6¼ inches

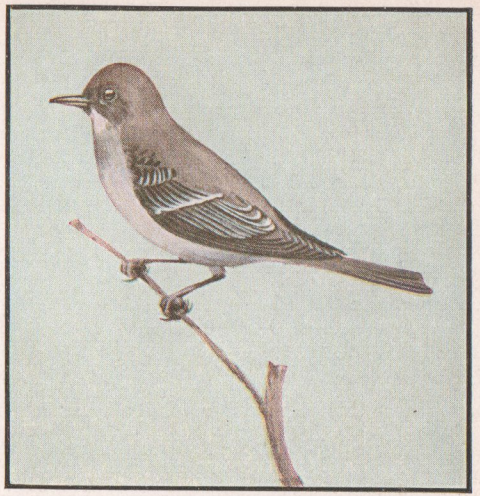
The wood pewee is just as industrious a flycatcher as the phoebe, but rather more of a songster. It is somewhat smaller than the phoebe, with relatively longer wings and more marked wing bars. In color, it is much like the phoebe, but in every other respect the cousins differ greatly despite the fact that they are both members of the same family. The pewee prefers the forest to the farm yard, and his *pee-a-wee* call is decidedly less aggressive than his cousin's more business-like greeting. His home, too, differs from that of the phoebe, being a dainty structure, covered with lichen and skillfully hung from the limb of a tree, usually in the deep woods. The brown-wreathed eggs are laid in May. A curious characteristic of the pewee is its apparent indifference about betraying the whereabouts of its nest. It moves freely about the nest when one is watching. The pewee is found in all parts of eastern North America in the summer but goes to the tropics for the winter.

WESTERN WOOD PEWEE

(Myiochanes richardsoni richardsoni)

Length, 5½ inches

Though almost indistinguishable from its eastern relative in coloration and habit, the notes of the western wood pewee identify it the instant they are heard. The call of the western wood pewee is a commonplace *deer* or *tweer* instead of the plaintive musical notes of the wood pewee. Its nest is also deeper and more cupped and is not coated with lichens. The western wood pewee inhabits orchards but instead of eating the fruit, it eats the insect enemies of the trees. Like all the flycatchers, its motions are swift and certain, though very graceful, and it seems never to miss its prey. It captures some insects not on the wing, for it is sometimes seen to pause before a branch or twig and snap one up there. Among the bugs that it eats are tree hoppers, leaf hoppers, negro bugs, etc. The one unfavorable criticism of the food habits of the pewee is that it eats too many parasitic bees and wasps.



WESTERN WOOD PEWEE

ACADIAN FLYCATCHER

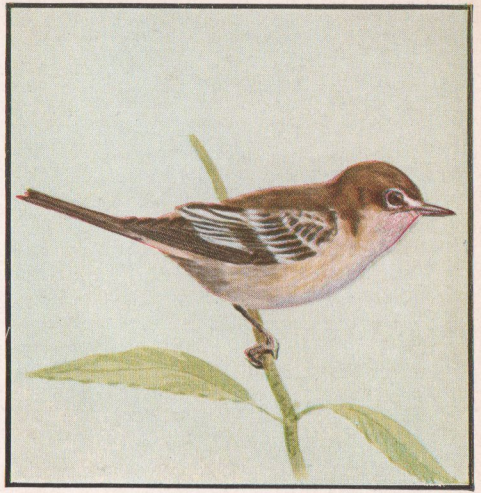
(Empidonax virescens)

Length, 6 inches

The Acadian flycatcher is a smaller member of this family, a home-loving bird that never ventures far from its nest. This is a frail structure, built on some low-hanging limb that sweeps out over a stream. It is one of the most approachable of the wood flycatchers, but because of its fondness for thickets and solitude, and because it is less nervously active than some of its cousins, it is likely to be overlooked. One observer noted its apparent liking for rhodohendron growths near streams in North Carolina, and another observer found the bird plentiful and calling frequently in the great Okefinokee swamp in Georgia, where its preference for solitude evidently was satisfied. Good opportunities to study this bird are offered as the result of its low-ranging habit. It perches generally not more than twenty feet from the ground. It is known by its sudden, explosive call, *pee-e-yuk* which seems more commonly to be uttered as *spee* or *peet*.

The Acadian flycatcher has a white throat and bright upperparts, light olive-green in color. The head is relatively large, and the wings are rather long with clear-cut bars. The underpart of the body is of a lighter shade. The female lays her creamy-white, brown-spotted eggs in the latter part of May. This bird's habits do not lead it to the garden or orchard, and consequently its food has little that is of economic interest. When

spring comes, the Acadians leave their tropical winter home and wing their way northward. During the summer, the family resides and travels in a limited portion of eastern North America and at that season its range is bounded on the south by Florida and on the north by Connecticut and Michigan. The Traills' flycatcher, another member of the flycatcher family, is found in eastern North America as well as in some of the western districts. The alder flycatcher, another representation of this species, is the brownest of flycatchers. It is rarely found in the depths of forests; its preference is the swamps where alders and willows grow. The Traills' and alder flycatchers occupy in breeding season the whole of the United States except the southeastern part south of northeastern Texas, Arkansas, and the mountains of West Virginia and extend north into Canada.



ACADIAN FLYCATCHER

HORNED LARK

(Otocoris alpestris alpestris)

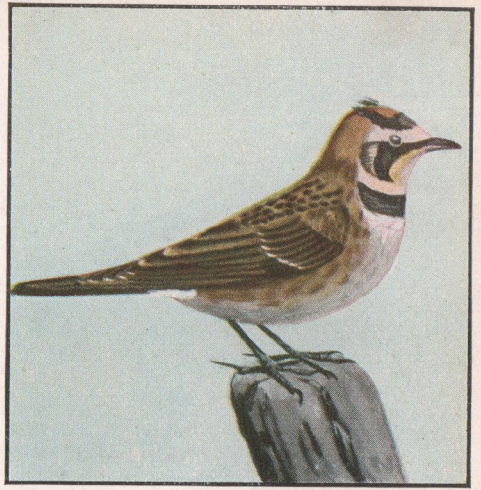
Length, 7¼ inches

A most characteristic feature of the horned lark is the black tufts, or horns, from which its common name is derived. It is a small and hardy bird and comes to the United States in winter from its nesting places in Labrador and the Hudson Bay country. It is a ground-loving bird of the open country rather than the forests, and during the day when hunting on the earth for food it may walk or run, but never hop. The flight of the horned lark is hesitant. It usually starts up hurriedly from the ground, uttering short, whistled notes. This is very characteristic of this lark and when disturbed it flies straight away for a short distance only to take a swing around and land near the starting point. One finds these birds in a great variety of places in weedy or freshly plowed fields; on meadows or other waste places; in closely grazed pastures and stubble fields. In the far west they live in hot desert valleys, on level grassy prairies, in foothills, and even on bare mountain peaks.

A black mark across the breast and two small, pointed tufts of feathers above the eyes make the horned lark easy to recognize. Weed seeds form the chief food supply for this bird, and it ranks high among the weed destroyers. The horned lark also is an active enemy of insect pests, especially in the nestling stage. Horned larks nest early, often before the snow has disappeared from the ground. When a-wing, during the

Horned Lark—Continued

mating season, they have a joyous, lilting song, somewhat resembling that of the bobolink. During the winter period they range as far south as Illinois and South Carolina. Hollows in the ground, lined with grass, serve the horned lark as a nest. Usually, this is hidden by overhanging sod or a stone. The eggs, three to five in number, are speckled and blotched with gray and brown and have a grayish ground color. Several smaller relatives of the horned lark are residents of the United States, among them being the prairie horned lark and the desert horned lark. The prairie bird has a white line over the eye, and is found in the Mississippi Valley. The desert horned lark, less distinctly marked than its prairie cousin, is found west of the Mississippi and as far north as Alberta, Canada.



HORNED LARK

MAGPIE

(Pica pica hudsonia)

Length, 19½ inches

The magpie, an attractive-appearing black-and-white bird with a long tail, is a member of the crow family, though slightly longer than the common black crow. In habits it has a mixture of shyness and boldness, and seems both pert and impudent, always ready for mischief. With an appetite for flesh, it delights in such tidbits as small birds and their eggs and young, and consequently is much condemned by many. It is also very noisy and forever chattering. So marked is this habit that "chattering like a magpie" has become a stock phrase in describing a talkative person. A loud, harsh *cack, cack* is the common note of the magpie, but it also utters a great variety of whistles and imitations. Its nest is a large, globular affair, built in bushes and trees at distances ranging from four to fifty feet from the ground. Sticks are used in the building of this home, which is completely closed except for an entrance at one side. The nest is lined with grass and mud. The eggs are white, thickly specked with yellowish brown, and from four to six eggs are laid.

In localities where the magpies are common, they steal the contents of traps, set for other forms of wild life and many complaints have been made against them for this reason. The main diet of this bird, however, consists of insects such as the destructive black crickets, grasshoppers and grubs, though it is fond also of fruits and berries, and in places becomes objectionable by picking brand marks on sheep until the animals are made to suffer severely thereby or even die.

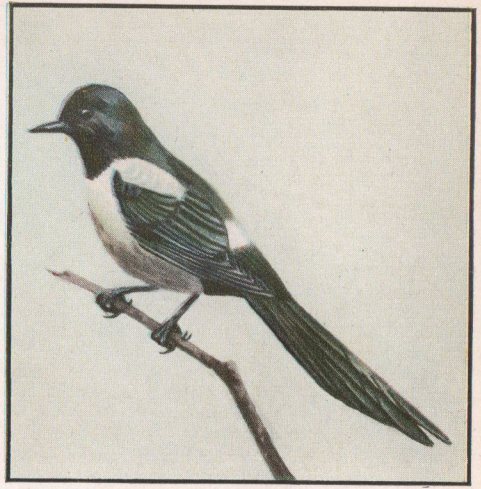
The magpie is a keen observer and

Magpie—Continued

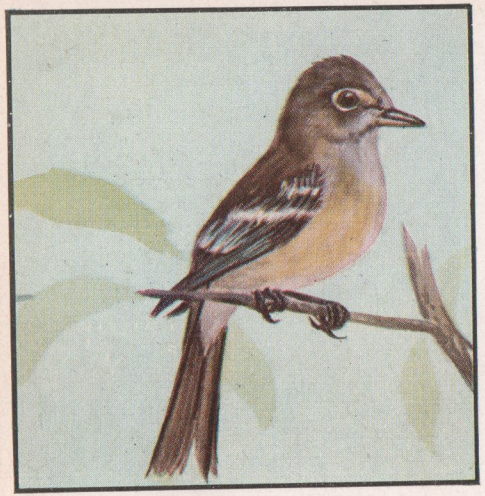
an eager investigator of anything new. Magpies are great talkers and are fond of company. Their notes have a conversational tone, and it is no wonder that they acquire the ability to imitate human speech when kept in captivity.

The color is a lustrous black with a varied and changing iridescence and sharply contrasting white underparts and patches on the shoulders and wings, the latter being conspicuous as the bird flies.

The yellow-billed magpie of California is precisely similar, except that the bill and a naked area at its base are yellow instead of black. The common magpie is confined to the west, its range reaching from Alaska to Arizona and from the plains to the Cascade mountains, being especially common in the Rocky mountains. In flight its colors present a beautiful contrast in black and white, as it moves slowly but gracefully through the air.



MAGPIE



LEAST FLYCATCHER

LEAST FLYCATCHER

(Empidonox minimus)

Length, 5 inches

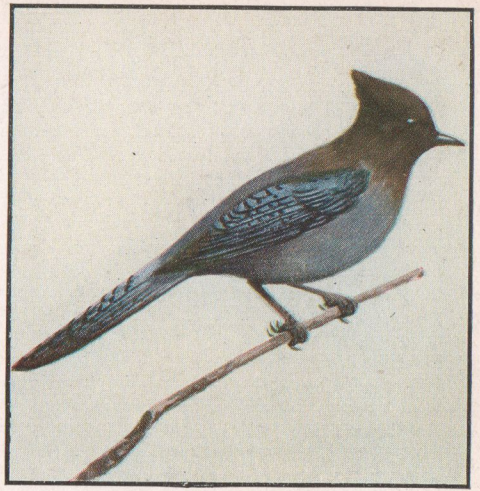
The least flycatcher, or chebec, is the smallest of our common flycatchers, but its energy compensates for its diminutive size. This little fellow announces his name *che-bec,* with a nervous jerk of head and tail, sometimes continuing this calling so persistently as almost to become a nuisance. Its habits are much like those of other members of the family, known to scientists as the Tyrannidee. Its sallies after insects often are directed from its observation perch down into the grass, or against the trunks of trees when its prey is seen in either of those places. Almost invariably it returns to its perch. The coat color of this bird is plain brownish olive and the head is somewhat darker. In the fork of a sapling or occasionally on a horizontal limb it places its nest, a neat, compact structure made of fine gray bark, fibers, dandelion down, hair, feathers, lined with fine narrow grasses and soft feathers. Two to four pure white or faint buff-colored eggs are laid.

STELLER'S JAY

(Cyanocitta stelleri stelleri)

Length, 12¼ inches

There are many handsome blue jays, but Steller's jay, with its blue body and high crest is the "dandy" of them all. Fine plumage, however, does not conceal quite all its faults from those who know the bird. It is both a nest robber and a cannibal, and has been found guilty of eating birds' eggs and young birds. It also consumes acorns, chestnuts, and beechnuts. Mrs. Florence Merriam Bailey speaks of its note as a squall, as it flirts its tail and dashes about through the woods. More shy and retiring than the blue jay of the eastern states, it seldom visits the orchard or the vicinity of the ranch buildings. This jay lives in the forests in the southern Rocky Mountain section, including the pine forests of Arizona, and in mountain ranges of New Mexico. As happens with many other species, there are several slightly varying local forms of Steller's jay in the Rocky Mountain section of the United States and Canada.



STELLER'S JAY

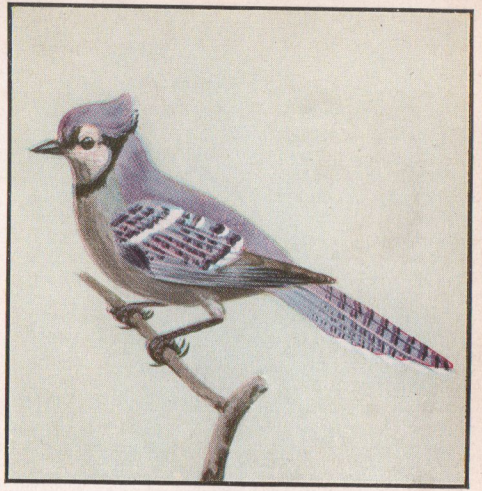
BLUE JAY

(Cyanocitta cristata cristata)

Length, 11½ inches

Some bird lovers call the blue jay the clown and scoffer of bird land. Nevertheless this bird is picturesque and seldom unpopular. In strange contrast to its beauty is its behavior. It is overbearing, it shrieks with a loud, harsh voice; and it robs the nests of other birds. Despite its faults, it is beloved by all bird lovers because of its intelligence, brilliant plumage, and dashing ways. Cocky is the proper word to use in describing this rather plump, blue-coated bird as it sits erect on the perch, with crested head held high in the air and its white-barred blue wings pointed upward as if poised for immediate flight. Blue is the prevailing color of the long graceful tail, although it wears a black collar and is barred with a darker shade of blue at regular intervals, and the ends of the outer feathers are white. The head, with its strong bill and dark eyes, is set off by an azure crest that may be stiffly erected. It is truly a handsome bird and carries itself erect and firmly balanced, as if it knew very well the elegance of its presence. Its steady, straightforward flight expresses dignity and the manner in which it swings to its perch expresses self-assurance. Both sexes are indistinguishable in plumage or in behavior. The blue jay is partial toward evergreens, especially the juniper or red cedar, for the close and bristling twigs protect its nest from both observation and sudden raids by owls. The blue jay has been accused of crime ever since it has been known. An observer is hard

to find who has not recorded this bird as feeding on the eggs or young birds of its neighbors. On the other hand some biographers have a feeling that the wickedness has been exaggerated. A two-syllable whistle is the common call of the blue jay, but the birds of this family make an endless variety of sounds mimicking other birds. Bushes or low trees, preferably young pines, are among its favorite nesting places. The nest is fashioned from twigs and sticks, and in it are laid four eggs, pale greenish blue, specked with brown. North America east of the Rocky Mountains and from the Gulf of Mexico to Labrador forms the ranging area for these birds, but the United States is "Home, Sweet Home" to them. Members of the tribe residing in the northern portions of this territory are the only ones to migrate. A smaller blue jay, known as the Florida jay, is found in the state for which it is named.



BLUE JAY

CANADA JAY

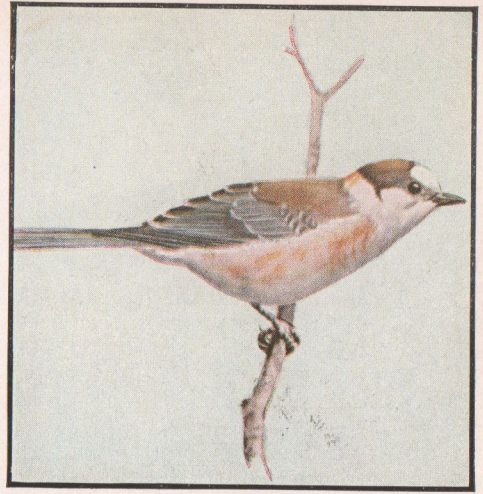
(Perisoreus canadensis canadensis)

Length, 11½ inches

The Canada jay is considered by many the cheekiest of the birds. Its confidence in mankind makes the "whiskey jack," as it is popularly called, a great favorite among lumberman, trappers, and campers in the northern woods. Moose bird is another name applied to it. Fearlessly it enters the camp and carries away everything, whether edible or not. Some of the pranks it plays serve to enliven otherwise tedious days for dwellers and visitors in the great expanses of lonely forests. Canada jack's general description is as follows: The forehead, including the nasal tufts, forepart of the crown, sides of head, chin, throat and chest are white. The back, shoulders, lesser wing-coverts, rump, and upper tail coverts, are plain mouse-gray. The wings and tail are slate-gray and the primaries slightly more bluish. The underparts of the body are plain drab-gray and sometimes almost quite white. Its notes include a hoarse *ca-ca-ca* and other sounds. As a songster "Jack" is considerably more versatile, though no more musical, than the blue jay. It does not confine its activities to the eastern parts of the Dominion for which it is named, but frequently invades the neighboring republic—the United States—and visits in northern New York, New England, and other borderline sections. While snow is still on the ground and often when the mercury is below zero this bird begins to nest. Its three or four eggs are gray, speckled and spotted with a darker shade of the same color. The Canada jay usually builds its nest on the lower branches of pine and other cone-bearing trees. Twigs, moss, and feathers are used in the construction of the home.

Canada Jay—Continued

There are three variant forms of the Canada jay. In the West in the Rocky Mountain Region, from central British Columbia, southern Alberta, and southwestern South Dakota to Arizona and Nebraska is the white-headed or Rocky Mountain jay. It is larger and lighter colored than the Canada jay. The entire head is white except the space just around and behind the eyes, which together with the hindneck, is slate-gray. In the wooded parts of Alaska and the adjacent part of Canada we find the Alaska jay. It is a Canada jay that has put on a dusky hood over its crown leaving only its forehead white. In Labrador is found a relative known as the Labrador jay, which has deeper black markings than those of the Canada jay on the back of the head and extending around the eye.



CANADA JAY

RAVEN

RAVEN

(Corvus corax sinuatus)

Length, 26½ inches

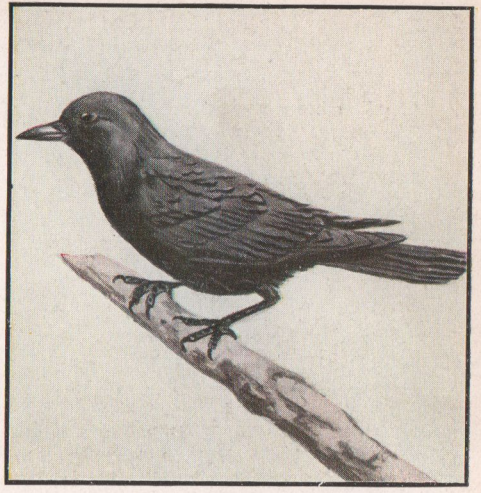
At a distance the raven, made famous by the poet Poe, looks much like a large crow, but closer inspection will show that it is a much larger bird, and its deep, harsh notes once heard will never be mistaken for the call of the crow. Cliffs and trees are the domiciles of this black, croaking fellow, and its brilliant plumage furnishes the adjective "raven-hued," used when describing an intensity of blackness. The raven has long, pointed throat feathers quite different from the short, rounded ones of its near relative. Ordinarily it is seen in the United States only in a few localities in Oregon, Montana, and South Dakota. The belief that the raven is destructive to young birds' eggs and to game is an inference rather than the result of close observation. Ravens may be seen during the summer time about the garbage piles in the Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. They may be recognized by their size, and very large bill.

CROW

(Corvus brachyrhynchos brachyrhynchos)

Length, 19¾ inches

With the possible exception of the robin, the crow is the best-known bird in America, but is not well liked. High in the trees this sable bird places its nest and there, in April, are laid four to six green eggs thickly marked with brown. The male and the female are alike in color. Well-known is the raucous caw of the crow, animating wintry wastes as a bird army flies hither and yon in search of convenient cornfields. To ragged dummies that stand in the fields and gardens, it has imparted the name "scarecrow," for despite its marauding habits, it is shy of men. During the winter they roost in colonies. In repose, the crow is a graceful enough bird, with its well-curved wings and straight tail. When aroused, however, as it screams defiance, the crow bunches its body, pushes its head forward, pulls up its wings and droops its tail, all of which gives it a rather bedraggled appearance.



CROW

STARLING

(Sturnus vulgaris)

Length, 8 inches

An alien brought to the United States from Europe in 1890 and placed in Central Park, New York City, was the starling, which now is a familiar bird in most of the region east of the Mississippi River, and especially in localities in the Middle Atlantic States and Southern New England. When the brief period that has elapsed since the introduction of the starling and the small number introduced are considered, it must be conceded that the increases and dissemination of this bird have been rapid. It has not increased or spread so rapidly as the house sparrow, but the sparrow's numbers sprang not from one importation, but from many, that took place in widely scattered places during a series of years. Its increase has been rapid in most regions now occupied by it, where it is in many places second in numbers only to the sparrow and the robin.

Its coat is metallic green and purple, heavily spotted both above and below with buff or white. The starling is ever ready to pick a quarrel, and seems to be master over the English sparrow, a bird also imported from Europe. It is a very hardy, muscular, and powerful bird and has the physical characters of a crow. It lives about the streets and in parks, building a nest in crevices of buildings and especially in the frame-work of elevated railroads and in towers and alcoves of the tall buildings in the larger cities. The starling is quick and active and constantly pecks at the ground in search of food as it scurries about on

Starling—Continued

he streets, over lawns or across vacant ots and fields. A long drawn note, like hat used in calling a dog, is the star- ing's most common call, but it has many thers, including mimicking calls of other irds. The short tail and long wings of his bird are good identification charac- ers of the bird when it is flying. The ncrease and spread of the starling is ue to its fecundity and its general fitness r the battle of life. It often has two roods in America, as in Europe. In id-May, the young starlings make the elkin ring with their harsh, rasping od-call. Later, the birds assemble in mall groups, which, still later, are com- ined to form flocks of thousands. hough objectionable in cities in winter, ecause of their filth, they make most scinating sights, as in large flocks. ith a wonderful unity of movement. ey execute their rapid maneuvers in e sky.

STARLING

BOBOLINK

(Dolichonyx oryzivorus)

Length, 7 inches

Famed in story and song, the bobolink is the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde of the bird world—the bird with a dual personality. When nesting, it is the merry minstrel of New England meadows; when traveling, it is the scourge of the South Carolina rice fields. While clad in its neat suit of black, white, and buff, it is known as bobolink and its tinkling song is heard overhead. This song is different from that of any other bird, so rapid and bubbling that the notes fairly fall over each other. It is quick on the wing and often three or four birds can be heard and seen at one time. *Tink tink* sounds its shortened call as it skims across the sky on the journey that covers thousands of miles. From four to six eggs, white, heavily spotted, clouded, and blotched with brown, are laid in its nest on the ground late in May or early in June.

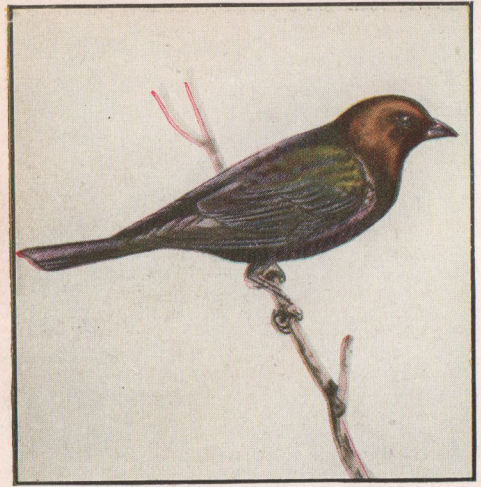
In July after the short season of song is over, the bobolinks gather in flocks, the males change their black and white plumage for a buff dress, like that of the female, and they then start on their long southward journey. Bobolinks nest in the area from northern New Jersey and Kansas to Manitoba and New Brunswick. In fall they frequent the reedy marshes, feeding on the seeds of grasses and are then known as reed or rice birds. In the guise of reedbirds, they leave the United States, by way of Florida, going to northwestern Argentina for the winter. As bobolinks, again, they return to their summer homes, arriving early in April. Bobolink is a good watchman, and it is hard to flush the female from the nest, for she leaves at the first warning of

Bobolink—Continued

her mate's *chah*, a harsh alarm note similar to that of the blackbird.

By the end of August the bobolink and its family have left their breeding grounds. It reaches the cultivated rice fields in the South as the crop is ripening. It is a decidedly useful bird in its northern home, but the bobolink becomes a serious pest when it reaches the rice fields. The damage caused to the ripening grain by the rice-bird, as the bobolink is commonly known in this part of the country, is very great and it not infrequently causes losses of thousands of dollars to individual planters. Fresh from the rice-fields of the southern United States the bobolink is in fat condition and many are killed for food. "Reedbirds on toast" is considered quite a delicacy.

BOBOLINK



COWBIRD

COWBIRD

(Molothrus ater ater)

Length, 8 inches

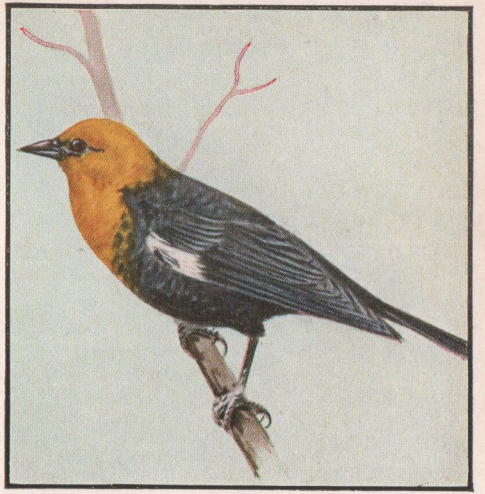
The cowbird gets its name from the fact that it associates with cattle, for the purpose of catching the flies that frequent them while grazing, or the other insects in the fields disturbed by the movements of the herds. The cowbird, however, does not limit its activities to the pasture but visits garden, field, wood, and orchard, and often, flocking with the blackbirds, roosts in the marsh. The cowbird has the trait of shifting its family cares to other birds. Being a member of a "shiftless lot," it neither makes a nest of its own nor cares for its young and instead of preparing a nest, the female cowbird slyly lays her eggs in the nests of smaller birds when the owners are absent. The male bird is colored a glossy greenish black, with a brown head. The female and young are dull gray in color. A low *chack* is the cowbird's call, as it spreads its wings and tail, and the male also utters a liquid, wiry squeak.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD

(Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus)

Length, 10 inches

A dweller of the marshes, the yellow-headed blackbird builds its nest of rushes woven about reeds growing in the water. These birds breed and migrate in large flocks, sometimes numbering thousands of birds. The male, apparently believing himself to be quite a singer, entertains his mate with a variety of queer, squeaking calls and whistles, produced during seemingly painful contortions. To the female is left the duty of hatching the eggs and caring for the young. The male is black with bright yellow head and breast. The female's coat is brownish and the head feathers are paler than those of the male and are mixed with brown. The rush-woven nest usually is placed from four inches to two feet above the water and is quite deep. In it are laid from four to six grayish eggs, profusely speckled with pale brown. The range of these birds is west of the Mississippi.



YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD

(Agelaius phoeniceus phoeniceus)

Length, 8½ inches

Like its yellow-headed cousins, aunts and uncles, the red-winged blackbird dwells in marshy places. Its *kong-quer-eeee* is as sure a sign of the presence of water as is the croaking of the frogs in the spring. It may be only a boggy marshland, or it may be a reedy lakeside, but water there will surely be. The male, in spring and early summer is unmistakable with its brilliant red shoulders. In winter, its feathers are tipped with brown, and the colors are less marked in the young. The feathers of the streaked female are grayish brown with bits of red on the shoulders. On a perch, the male bird half spreads his wings, fluffs out his scarlet feathers, and bursts into bloom, as it were, as he utters his familiar notes—a singing flower.

The most beautiful blackbird in North America is the so-called "red-wing." It is sometimes called the "officer bird" because of the brilliant red shoulders which correspond to epaulets. In the spring this blackbird is a jealous guardian of its eggs and young, and if a hawk or crow comes near it does not hesitate to rise in the air with all the appearance of doing battle. One can always tell when approaching the nest of the red-wing, for one of the birds will surely come out and scold loudly as he approaches. This is continued as long as he remains in the neighborhood of the bird's nest. Except when nesting, red-wings live in flocks. The nest is built in alders or button bushes, and sometimes on the ground. Although the birds arrive at their nesting marshes in March, their pale blue eggs, spotted, blotched and scrawled, are not laid until May. Eastern North America, from Florida to

Red-Winged Blackbird—Continued

Canada is the home of red-wings during the nesting season. In winter they are found southward from Maryland. The red-wing does not have many friends in the farming communities of the United States. There is a widespread feeling among the farmers that this bird does a great deal of damage to the crops and at times this is true, for they eat the heads of growing grain. Careful food studies, however, reveal that the good this bird does far outweighs the injury. Seeds of ragweed, barnyard grass, and smartweed are food favorites of the red-wings, though when these are not available they will eat corn, wheat, and oats as well as numerous insects, many of which are of harmful varieties.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD

MEADOWLARK

(Sturnella magna magna)

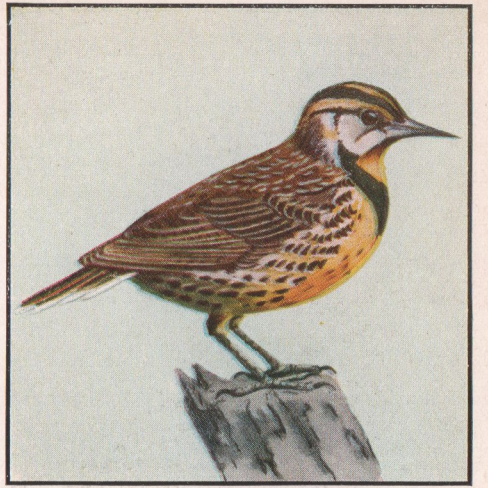
Length, 10½ inches

Fifer of the fields is an appropriate name for the meadowlark. Its high, clear whistle is one of the most welcome bird songs of early spring. The song of the western bird is loud, clear, and melodious. That of its eastern relative is similar, but feebler, and loses much by comparison. For its home, the eastern bird chooses level and slightly rolling ground, free from trees, and, if possible, near a water supply. The meadowlark is one of the species of birds that has increased in numbers since the explorers came to North America. Large areas of our country especially in the Eastern and Southern States, were originally covered with dense forests. This bird, being one of open country, was therefore restricted to the comparatively few prairies that then existed. As soon as the early settlers began to cut down the trees, and as field and meadows developed, the range of the meadowlark was extended and the birds increased in numbers.

The meadowlark is a large, quail-like bird, and has yellow underparts and a black breast-crescent. White outer tail feathers are shown when it flies. The birds' alarm call is an unmusical *dzit* or *yert* and a string of beady, metallic notes. In some localities the meadowlark is classed and illegally shot as a game bird. This should not be done and from the farmer's standpoint it is a mistake, since its value as an insect eater is far greater than as an object of pursuit by the sportsman. This bird therefore has a just claim on the respect and affections of the people whose country it adorns, and in whose fields it is a conspicuous figure. Its nest is built on the ground among the dead herbage from the

Meadowlark—Continued

last year's growth. It usually is overarched and skillfully hidden to protect the eggs and the sitting bird from view and from the weather. So completely hidden is the nest as often to defy even the most careful searcher. The meadowlark lays from four to six white eggs specked with brown. From Pennsylvania southward, the bird is found throughout the winter, its numbers increasing farther south. The bulk of the species is migratory from the Northern States. Meadowlarks wage a ceaseless warfare upon insects, and consequently these form the major part of their diet. Grasshoppers and crickets are their favorites. Although migrating flocks, before being broken up for the nesting season, sometimes destroy sprouting corn, the meadowlarks must be considered friends rather than enemies of the farmer.



MEADOWLARK

WESTERN MEADOWLARK

WESTERN MEADOWLARK

(Sturnella neglecta)

Length 8¼ inches

The western meadowlark is rarely seen east of the Mississippi River. It is grayer than its kinsman, with disconnected tail-bars and yellow feathers spreading along the sides of the throat. If, before it takes wing, you should see it plainly in the grass, you can hardly miss the fine yellow breast with its sharply drawn crescent of glossy black; and when it springs into the air and speeds away in its peculiar half-fluttering, half-sailing flight, the white outer tail-feathers are equally conspicuous. The call notes and songs of the two meadowlarks differ, and if the eastern bird plays the fife, then that of the West plays the flute, its bubbling grace notes contrasting with the straight whistle of its relative. The birds, however, have similar food habits and are much alike in size and form. Like the eastern bird, the western meadowlark preys on insect pests and seems to be especially fond of alfalfa and cotton weevils. Grain is eaten mostly in winter and spring and consists, therefore, for the most part, of waste kernels.

ORCHARD ORIOLE

(Icterus spurius)

Length, 7 inches

One of the most useful birds that we have is the orchard oriole. As the name indicates, it prefers to live in the orchards, where worms, caterpillars, beetles, and grasshoppers, its chief supplies of food, are plentiful. It is gracefully formed and the male wears a rich, but not dazzling, coat of chestnut and black, while the female's attire is yellowish and gray. The young male's coloring is similar to that of the female but he has a black face and throat. The orchard orioles have a cheery and pleasing warble, rich, rapid, and loud, and a chattering note of alarm. The nest is a beautiful basket of grass, woven into a deep cup and usually placed in the forks of trees or bushes. Often these nests are made of green grasses. From four to six eggs are laid, white but speckled, scrawled, and spotted with black and brown. States east of the Plains from the Gulf to Massachusetts and Michigan are the breeding ground of the orchard oriole.

ORCHARD ORIOLE

BALTIMORE ORIOLE

(Icterus galbula)

Length, 8 inches

Brilliance of plumage, sweetness of song, and faultless food habits make the Baltimore oriole a favorite with mankind. It is a sociable bird and likes human company. Its attractive, basket-shaped nest usually is hung near a house, from the extreme end of a bough, and often within easy reach from a window. This nest, woven from bits of string and grasses, is so securely fastened to the branch as to make it safe even in stormy weather and is so placed as to be out of reach of enemies. Children often find amusement by furnishing bits of colored yarn for the bird and watching it weave the bits into its nest. Hang-nest, fire-bird, and golden robin are other names applied to this oriole. Linnaeus, the great naturalist of the eighteenth century, published in 1766, a scientific description of this bird and noticed that its colors were the orange and black of Lord Baltimore's family, he named it after the baron; and that is why it is called the Baltimore oriole.

The beautiful male bird is described as follows: The head, neck and shoulders are of a uniform black and that on the throat extends into the middle portion of the chest. The rump, upper tail-coverts, lesser and middle wing coverts, and underparts of the body, are rich orange or orange-yellow. The wings, except the lesser and middle coverts are black and the greater coverts broadly tipped with white. The wing feathers are more or less edged with the same color. The middle pair of tail-feathers are black except the concealed basal portion. The remainder of the tail is light orange or orange-yellow, crossed near the base by a broad band of black. The

Baltimore Oriole—Continued

song of the Baltimore oriole is a clear, varied whistle or warble. Its call is a plaintive whistle. Caterpillars, ants, grasshoppers, wasps, and beetles are the bird's principal foods. Little vegetable matter is eaten. The Baltimore oriole breeds as far north as Manitoba and New Brunswick, and it winters in Central America. During the nesting season, five or six eggs are laid, white, scrawled with blackish brown. In the West, Bullock's oriole takes the place of the Baltimore oriole. The western bird has yellow cheeks instead of black but in form and habits it is much like its eastern cousin. It is a most striking bird in orange and black. It is a good singer and a clever nest builder. The food habits do not differ essentially from those of the Baltimore oriole.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD

(Euphagus cyanocephalus)

Length, 10 inches

The Brewer's blackbird is the handsomest of all the blackbird race, but its love song is a rather ludicrous attempt at music making. This bird is entirely black. The head and neck are glossy violet. The rest of the plumage is bluish-green. In winter the plumage is more glossy. The glossy black coat shimmers in the sunlight reflecting purple, blue, and green. The bill is black and the eye pale yellow. Like most blackbirds this one has mannerisms. At the nest it spreads its tail nervously and scolds. When it sits on a perch and notices some one, it bristles up and gives a shrill whistle. In the western states it takes the place of the grackle, or crow-blackbird, which is well known in sections farther east. This western bird is at home in fields, meadows, and orchards and about ranch buildings and cultivated fields. It feeds freely in stockyards and fields and does not hesitate to share in the fruit crops in season. The nest is usually placed about thirty feet from the ground in trees or bushes. It is constructed with a rough coarse foundation of twigs, plant stalks, bark, and rootlets mixed and held together with manure or mud and lined with finer similar materials and horse or cow hair. Usually five dull greenish-white eggs are laid. Brewer's blackbirds live in flocks. During the cherry season, they often infest orchards, especially in the California fruit country, but when nearby ground is plowed they usually desert the fruit trees and follow almost at the heels of the

Brewer's Blackbird—Continued

plowman in search of such insects, worms, and grubs as may be turned up. Many crop pests, such as the cottonboll worm, corn worm, and cutworm, are eaten by this representative of the blackbird family. Fruit, grain and weed seeds also are eaten in season. In size, appearance and habits, this bird is similar to its eastern relatives. Its breeding ground extends east as far as the Great Plains and northward into Canada. It winters over most of its breeding ground in the United States and south as far as Guatemala. When autumn comes the rusty blackbird, a relative of the Brewer's blackbird, appears in small flocks in the grain fields. It is now well known over eastern North America. The plumage of the male is almost pure black with a greenish gloss, while the young bird in autumn is mainly rusty-brown.

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD

PURPLE GRACKLE

PURPLE GRACKLE

(Quiscalus quiscula quiscula)

Length, 12½ inches

The grackle is the largest of the northern blackbirds, and is easily distinguished from starlings, with which it frequently associates, by its waddling, walking gait and its long tail. Dark, metallic plumage, which reflects the deeper rainbow hues, sets apart the purple grackle from others of its kind. It has pale yellow eyes and a long fan-shaped tail that often is "keeled" in flight. The female's color is duller than that of the male. Purple grackles migrate in flocks, and parks and cemeteries are favorite dwelling places for large colonies. The notes of this bird are harsh and cracked but make a pleasing medley when heard in chorus. Its nest sometimes is built in pine trees as high as thirty feet from the ground. Again, the nest may be found among the bushes and even in a hole in a tree. From three to seven pale blue eggs are laid, blotched and scrawled with brown and black. The grackle eats grain throughout the year.

BRONZED GRACKLE

(Quiscalus quiscula aeneus)

Length, 11½ inches

Though of habits and size similar to those of its eastern and western relatives, the bronzed grackle differs in having a distinct bronze appearance of the body and in lacking the rainbow reflections that distinguish the purple grackle. The whole head and neck are generally a dark peacock blue or green. A large portion of its time is spent on the ground. As it is walking and turning its head this way and that, it reflects the sun from its bronzed back. During migration, it is found within the range of the purple grackle. It is most useful in spring, when it follows in the plowman's furrow, gathering, for food, the grubs and worms as they are turned up. Like other grackles, this bird does much good during the breeding season by eating destructive insects. Snails, small fish, salamanders, and an occasional mouse also are eaten by this bird. Large flocks, however, sometimes cause considerable damage to standing crops.

BRONZED GRACKLE

EVENING GROSBEAK

(Hesperiphona vespertina vespertina)

Length, 8¼ inches

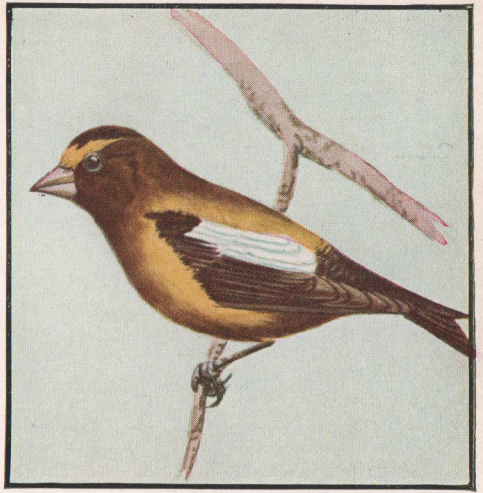
From the far northwest, at rare, irregular, and unheralded intervals, comes the evening grosbeak, a bird whose attractive appearance makes it indeed welcome. In recent years its visits have been noted more frequently than in the past. Its call is short and cheery and has been termed wild and free. The male is large, thick-set, and heavy billed, with a black crown, yellow forehead and body, black wings, and black tail. The inner wing quills are white. The female's body is brownish gray, tinged with yellow, and the wings and tail are black with white markings. Notable traveler that it is, the evening grosbeak ranges all over western North America and winters regularly eastward as far as Minnesota. At irregular intervals it appears, during the winter, in the North Atlantic States.

Its food consists of the buds and seeds of trees—box-elders and maples are favorites—but it can be attracted by an offering of sunflower seeds. Evening grosbeaks usually feed in small flocks of six or eight to ten birds. These birds are particularly fond of various frozen and dried fruits on vines and trees from which the seeds are taken. A student who kept some grosbeaks in captivity for nearly two years reports that they refused to eat any kind of grain except a few oats and that only when hard pressed. They absolutely refused to touch insects that were furnished. The nest is located far above from the ground in a coniferous or willow tree. It is a flat, slight

Evening Grosbeak— Continued

structure, made of twigs and roots, and is sometimes lined with lichens. Three or four eggs are laid of a clear green, blotched with pale brown. The notes of this bird, when it is perching, resemble the jingle of small sleigh bells. Its song is described as a wandering, jerky warble. Although highly colored, and in flight having prominent white wing patches, the yellow and white are difficult to see when the bird alights on trees on which lichens are found.

A variety known as the western grosbeak comes from western Canada down through the mountains all the way to Mexico. They breed in the mountains of Arizona and are found near the water in the southwestern mountain country. In many of the towns of the Pacific northwest they are fairly common in winter, particularly along in the streets, trees, and in parks.



EVENING GROSBEAK

PINE GROSBEAK

(Pinicola enucleator leucura)

Length, 9 inches

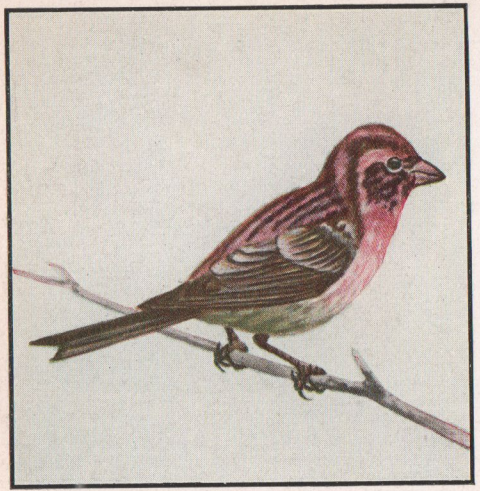
The pine grosbeak, like the evening grosbeak, would be a notable figure in any gathering of birds, but coming, as it does, in the barren time of the year, when the bird population is small and the trees are leafless, it is as conspicuous as it is welcome. This bird loves the great pine forests of Canada and the United States, hence its name, though it is sometimes called the nomad of the north. One may find it at work on the pine cones seeking the seeds on which it feeds. This bird has no real economic value except perhaps in the distribution of seeds of trees. Its food consists mainly of buds from pine and spruce trees and the berries of the Virginia juniper and the mountain ash.

The adult male bird is unmistakable, with its beautiful rosy-red body and its gray back, wings, and tail. It is similar in form to the male evening grosbeak. The female also is like the female evening grosbeak during the summer. When traveling the pine grosbeak feeds on the seeds of other trees and bushes. Its note is a clear whistle of three or four sounds, easily imitated. Its song is long and melodious. This bird is said to breed very early, even when there is snow about. The breeding is no doubt irregular because nests have been found in the summer. Northern North America is the range of the pine grosbeak. It winters south as far as Indiana and New Jersey. On rare occasions individuals have been seen as far south as Kentucky and Washington, D. C. There are several varieties of the pine grosbeak in the western part of the United States. The Rocky Mountain pine grosbeak lives in the Rocky Mountains from

Pine Grosbeak—Continued

west central Idaho and Montana to northern New Mexico. The California pine grosbeak breeds in the central Sierra Nevada mountains in California. The Alaska pine grosbeak breeds from northwestern Alaska and northwestern Mackenzie to northern Washington and winters south to eastern British Columbia and Montana. The Kodiak pine grosbeak is a bird of southern Alaska coming south in winter along the coast to British Columbia. In the grosbeak family the cardinal or redbird is perhaps the most familiar, since it is more generally distributed throughout the southern half of the United States. The rose-breasted grosbeak is the species of the eastern States, while the black-headed grosbeak is a native of the west. It may be found anywhere from eastern Nebraska to California and from British Columbia south to the plateau of Mexico.

PINE GROSBEAK



PURPLE FINCH

PURPLE FINCH

(Carpodacus purpureus purpureus)

Length, 6¼ inches

The purple finch is a beautiful songster, and in the early spring, just when the snow is leaving and the air is bracing, its musical warble is loud, long-continued, and sweet. Its call note is a querulous whistle. Despite its name, the male bird is dull rosy red and the female is streaked brownish gray. Purple finches are erratic wanderers, traveling on no fixed schedule but seeming to feel at home wherever they find themselves. Except when nesting, they usually travel in small flocks, and frequently remain for weeks in favored localities. Sometimes this bird does considerable damage to budding fruit trees, such as the peach and the cherry. In winter any seed-bearing tree will furnish a satisfactory meal. Its nest is made of bark, twigs, rootlets, and grasses and is placed at almost any height in evergreen or orchard trees. The eggs, four in number, are greenish blue with strong blackish specks.

HOUSE FINCH

(Carpodacus mexicanus frontalis)

Length, 5½ inches

Because of its food habits, the house finch, red-head, or linnet, as it is variously called, has an unenviable reputation, second only, so far as its family is concerned, to the English sparrow. This bird is a seed eater and occasionally eats wild berries. It is particularly common in California, and as this state is devoted to fruit-growing all the year round, the house finches get more than their share. With its strong beak the bird has no difficulty in breaking the skin of the hardest fruit and feasting upon the pulp, thereby spoiling the fruit and giving weaker-billed birds a chance to sample and acquire a taste for something that they, otherwise, might not molest. Extensive cultivation, of course, has greatly reduced the bird's former natural supply of weed seeds, and this probably is responsible, in some measure, for its onslaughts on the fruit crops. The house finch eats only a small proportion of animal food.

HOUSE FINCH

GOLDFINCH

(Astraglinus tistis tistis)

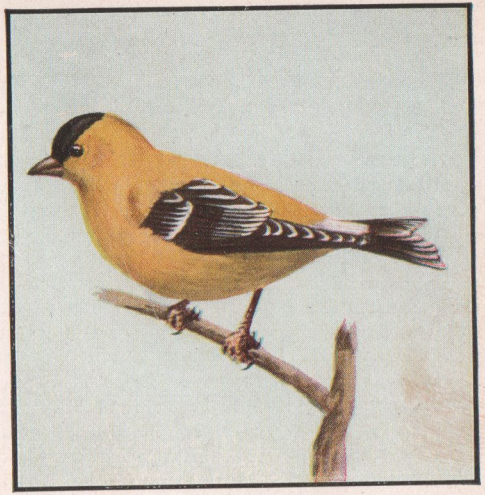
Length, 5 inches

The goldfinch, known also as the yellow-bird, wild canary and lettuce bird is one of the most attractive of our common birds. It is small but very sociable in habits. Except during the short season devoted to domestic duties they associate in flocks. The sweet voice and attractiveness of the goldfinch make it welcome about gardens and the home. To hear a merry flock of goldfinches singing their spring chorus is like hearing the spirit of the season set to music. While clad in his "goldfinch" garb, the male bird is readily known, but in winter, when it dons the dull yellow-olive dress of its mate, it is harder to recognize. Because of its musical ability, the goldfinch is sometimes called the wild canary. It also is known as the thistle bird.

The last name is derived from the fact that the goldfinch is often seen on thistles, the down of which is used in making its nest. Plant fibers and grasses also go into the building of its home, which is usually placed in the forks of some bush, or more frequently in willows or alders near water. Four or five unmarked, pale bluish eggs are deposited in this nest. Goldfinches are late housekeepers, not nesting before the latter half of June, and the eggs are laid in the nest warmly lined with thistledown. The flight of the goldfinch is a peculiar series of drops and rises accompanied by an intermittent twitter. Seeds form its chief food. In autumn and winter, the birds visit gardens and parks in search of sunflower seeds, the flowers, in some localities, being grown for the express purpose of feeding the finches in winter. If you would like to see this bird about the garden allow some lettuce plants to

Goldfinch—Continued

blossom and bear seed. One of the best ways to attract any wild bird about the house is to provide it with food. The actions of the goldfinch resemble those of the canary in a cage at its seed cup. The goldfinch winters in the United States and breeds from Virginia and Missouri as far north as Labrador in the section east of the Rocky Mountains. There is a very near relative of the goldfinch residing exclusively in the western states; it is the Arkansas goldfinch. It is a little smaller than the other members of this family. The Arkansas goldfinch feeds almost entirely on weed seeds. A slightly variant form of the Arkansas goldfinch is known as the green-backed goldfinch and is found in the southwestern United States.



GOLDFINCH

PINE SISKIN

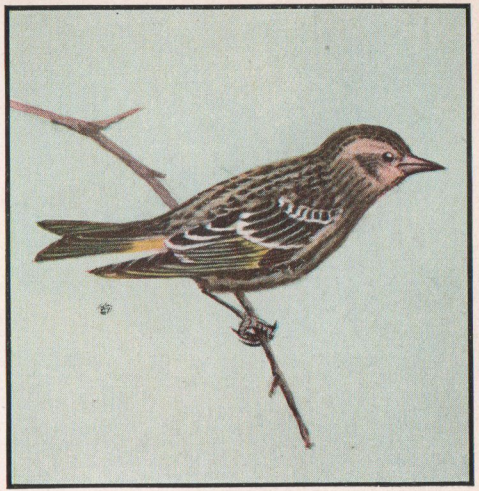
(Spinus pinus)

Length, 4¾ inches

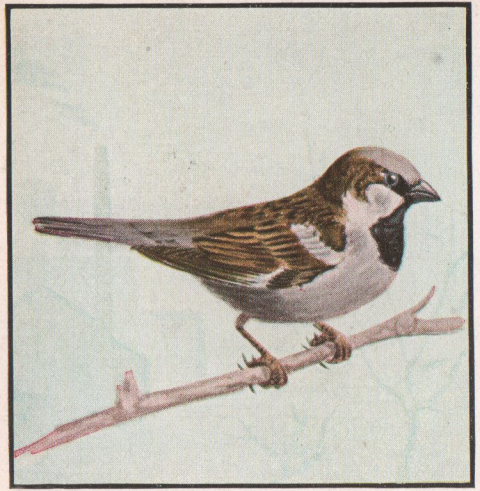
In general habits, the pine finch, or siskin, is much like the goldfinch. It feeds on weed seeds and catkins, particularly the alder, and on seeds of cone-bearing trees. Its song and call notes also are much like those of the goldfinch, but they have a slight nasal twang that marks the difference. In appearance, the pine finch is a streaked, sparrowlike bird, with yellow markings in wings and tail which are visible in flight. The siskin is often mistaken for the goldfinch, especially in winter, when the male goldfinch dons its dull-colored garb.

A general description of the pine siskin is as follows: The plumage above is gray or brown and is conspicuously streaked with these same colors. The wings and tail are dull black. The middle and greater wing coverts are tipped with white and the inner wing quills are edged with the same. The basal portion of the wing and tail feathers are pale yellow. These are most concealed. The underparts of the bird are dull white except perhaps on the abdomen. The bill is small, conical, and acute. The wings are long and pointed and the tail is rather short and forked. Pine finches are often seen hanging head downward from ends of branches, as they feed on seeds or buds. When thus occupied, they are very approachable. There is little, however, to attract an observer to a flock feeding quietly in the weeds. They look like plain little brown sparrows. A

quick observer will notice the yellow patches on the wings and tail as they fly away. In cone-bearing trees, at any distance from the ground, pine finches build their nests, fashioned from rootlets and grasses and lined with pine needles and hair. The eggs are greenish white, speckled with reddish brown and number from three to five. This bird is quite uncertain in its abode. One year it may be seen in large numbers about one group of mountain peaks and valleys. The next year perhaps not a siskin will be seen in the whole district. Then again there are winters when they will be common. The siskin is a northern bird and is found in the United States only in winter and early spring, except in the extreme northern parts. The breeding area extends northward from the northern boundary of the United States and from points slightly farther south in the mountain ranges.



PINE SISKIN



ENGLISH SPARROW

ENGLISH SPARROW

(Passer domesticus)

Length, 5¾ inches

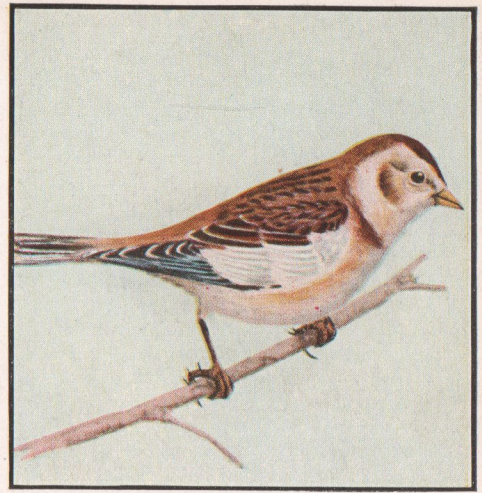
Imported into America and liberated at Brooklyn, N. Y. about 1850, the English sparrow, because of its bullying attitude toward other birds and its destructive habits, is looked upon as an undesirable alien. Hardy and adaptable, it is able to stand our most severe winters. The bird is stocky with upperparts of reddish-brown, streaked with black, and its underparts are grayish-white. It should not be confused with our desirable native sparrows. Grain, fruit, peas, and beans are favorite foods of this bird, although it also feeds, to some extent, on insect pests. In the cities, most of the bird's food is waste-material gathered from the streets. The eggs, four to seven in number, usually are white, evenly marked with olive varying from plain white to almost uniform olive brown. Two broods of young in a season are common, but sometimes three, four, and five are raised. The English sparrow now ranges over the entire United States and southern Canada.

SNOW BUNTING

(Plectrophenax nivalis nivalis)

Length, 8 inches

The snow bunting is a hardy and beautiful winter visitor to the United States from the northland. Sometimes this bird is called "snow flake" because when winter comes it blows in like a true snow flake, settles down on the hillsides, and feeds in the snow. This bird shares some common traits with the horned lark. Both birds prefer the open spaces and are frequently seen together in fields or along streams. The buntings are usually seen in flocks numbering from a dozen to several hundred. Reports indicate that they feed almost exclusively on the ground. The snow bunting seems to be a very nervous, restless bird. White is the prevailing tone of the plumage of the snow bunting. The song is a low twittering while feeding, and a short whistle when in flight. The nest is made of moss and grass and is sunk in the moss that covers much of Arctic America. The eggs are three to five in number and are pale greenish white, specked with brown.



SNOW BUNTING

VESPER SPARROW

(Pooecetes gramineus gramineus)

Length, 6¼ inches

Its habit of tuning up as evening shadows begin to fall has given the vesper sparrow its name although it is often popularly known as the "bay-winged sparrow" or "grass finch." Its song, somewhat like that of the song sparrow, which it also resembles in form, is a clear ascending series of whistles sounded from its perch on a fence post or bush top. Dry pastures and dusty roadsides are favored feeding places for the vesper sparrow. Two white feathers, prominently shown on either side of the tail when the bird flies, make it easy to identify. After the manner of its kind it is shy and often in the fields or on the road sides will run along in front of a pursuer for some distance, keeping just ahead until too closely pressed when it darts away with a sweeping undulating flight to a distant fence post or shelter in the grass. The vesper sparrow's nest, fashioned from coarse grasses or weed stalks and lined with finer grasses, rootlets and long hair, is placed in a weedy field or pasture. Four or five whitish eggs, marked and blotched with brown, are laid. The bird's range covers eastern North America, from Virginia to southern Canada. It winters in the southern part of the United States.

Like other members of the sparrow family, this bird is a notable seed eater, but does not limit itself to a vegetable diet. During the summer, and especially during the breeding season, it subsists

Vesper Sparrow—Continued

largely on insects and feeds its young much the same food. Beetles and grasshoppers are most sought after, and next to them come the cutworms, army worms, and other smooth caterpillars. The vesper sparrow should be awarded the fullest protection because of its value to the farmer. In western North America, except the Pacific coast district, there is a variant form of the vesper sparrow, known as the Western vesper sparrow. It averages larger, and has a slenderer bill than the eastern vesper sparrow. It is also slightly paler and grayer and the marks of the chest are not so dark. Both of these forms are replaced in the Pacific Coast district by the Oregon vesper sparrow. The Oregon vesper sparrow is smaller than vesper sparrow and is browner above and distinctly buffy below.

VESPER SPARROW

SAVANNAH SPARROW

(Passerculus sandwichensis savanna)

Length, 5½ inches

Because it prefers fields to dooryards, the Savannah sparrow is known by few persons other than bird students. It lives on the ground most of the time and its darting flight, followed by a sudden dive to cover, and its insignificant song, combine to make it hard to recognize. Its breast and sides are streaked with brown and it has a touch of yellow before the eyes and also on the bend of the wings. One peculiarity of this commonplace bird is its habit of singing on the ground. This is quite unusual with birds that sing at all. The Savannah sparrow is primarily a bird of the fields, especially of those near the coast, and it is likely to be mistaken for several other field sparrows, for the vesper probably more than any others. Careful study of the bird's coloration and its ground-singing habit makes its identification comparatively easy. Not only is it very abundant in eastern United States during migration but a few remain in the north through the summer.

The Savannah sparrow's breeding ground is in the northern part of the United States and northward, and its winter home is in the southern sections of this country. Its food habits are similar in general to those of other sparrows, and it is one of the most useful members of the sparrow family. Its nest, made of grasses, usually is placed in a hollow in the ground, concealed by grass or weeds. In this nest are deposited four eggs that

are grayish and spotted with brown. The notes of this bird are a weak trill or twitter and a short chirp. A peculiarity of this otherwise commonplace bird is its habit of singing on the ground. A slightly paler bird is found in the region from the Plains west to the coast ranges and is called the western Savannah sparrow. Except in color tones, it is similar to the eastern bird. Other members of the group are: Bryant's sparrow, somewhat smaller and darker than the Savannah and found in the salt marshes along the coast of California; Belding's sparrow, still darker in coloration than Bryant's and found in the salt marshes of southern and lower California; and the large-billed sparrow, differing as its name suggests in the size of the bill and also in not having the upperparts conspicuously streaked; this sparrow is also found in the salt marshes of southern California and lower California.

SAVANNAH SPARROW

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW

(Ammodramus savannarum australis)

Length, 4½ inches

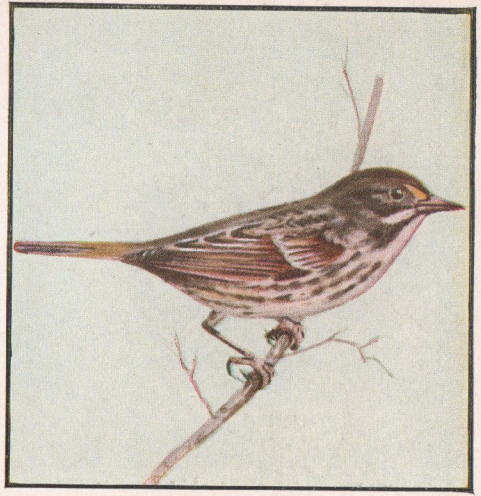
From the insect-like tone of its song, the grasshopper sparrow derives its name, and it can hardly be mistaken for that of any other bird of the fields. It is small and short-tailed, with a streaked back pattern that suggests "feather scales." Its crown is blackish with a central buffy stripe, and the nape is brown and gray. The sides of the head and breast are buff. A grass-lined hollow in a field serves as a nest for this sparrow. Usually it is arched over as a protection against the sun and to conceal the eggs, four to five of which, white, brown-specked, are laid in June. When alarmed, the grasshopper sparrow darts off and drops suddenly to the ground some distance away. It is a common dweller in old fields where sorrel and daisies grow, and as a destroyer of insect pests it is most efficient. This bird is found in summer in the section of the United States east of the Rocky Mountains and it winters in the South.

SEASIDE SPARROW

(Passerherbulus maritimus maritimus)

Length, 6 inches

One of the dwellers in the salt marshes along the seashore is the seaside sparrow. It nests on the ground and runs about through the thick grasses, taking wing only when hard pressed. Its plumage is grayish green with no black markings, and it has a yellow spot before the eye. The habits of the seaside sparrow and of the sharp-tailed sparrow, frequently found in the same marshes, are much the same. The seaside finch, as it is sometimes called, is migratory, coming during the latter part of April and remaining until late in October, sometimes southern tribes remain in the same locality throughout the year. During the latter part of May, three or four pale greenish or pale brownish white eggs, finely spotted all over and wreathed with rufous and dull purple are laid. The seaside sparrow feeds on small crabs and seeds of marsh grasses, and does not come in contact to any great extent with cultivated crops.



SEASIDE SPARROW

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW

(Zonotrichia leucophrys leucophrys)

Length, 6¾ inches

Except in the mountain ranges or in the extreme northern parts of the United States, the white-crowned sparrow is known in this country only as migrant. In the North it is commonly found in deeply wooded ravines and on side hills. During its visits to the United States, the bird rarely if ever sings, but in its summer home it has a clear tinkling song like that of the related white-throated sparrow, with which it is associated here. Its song is a clear piping *see-dee-dee-deee*. The call note is a sharp chirp. This beautiful sparrow is much more numerous in the western than in the eastern States, where, indeed it is rather rare. In the East it is shy and retiring, but it is bolder and more conspicuous in the far West and there often frequents gardens and parks.

As its name indicates, the adult bird has a white crown, which is bordered with black, the black covering the space before the eyes. In its relative found west of the Rocky Mountains, these spaces are white. This sparrow is often mistaken for the white-throated sparrow, though the difference in coloration is very marked. The white-crown lacks entirely the yellow patch before the eye, the white stripe over the eye and the white patch on the throat, all of which are conspicuous marking of the white-throat's plumage. The white-throat's head is much more nearly flat on the crown than is the white-crown's, which is distinctly dome-shaped. The manners of the two birds are not unlike. The white-crowned sparrow usually nests beneath patches of brush or in bushes. Its four or five eggs are white, heavily spotted with brown. The breeding area of this

White-Crowned Sparrow—Cont'd

bird extends northward from the northern United States and also in high ranges in this country and south to Mexico. Like other sparrows, the white-crown feeds largely on weed seeds, many of them of noxious varieties. Its favorite seems to be the rough pigweed. In addition to its vegetable food, it eats some harmful insects. Charges that the white-crown eats buds from fruit trees remain unproved. It does, however, share in the fruit crops grown within its range. Evidently neither the farmer nor the fruit grower has much to fear from the white-crowned sparrow. The little fruit it eats is mostly wild and the grain eaten is waste or volunteer. In western North America there are two varieties of the white-crowned sparrow—Gambel's sparrow and Nuttall's sparrow. Gambel's sparrow is not found in the Pacific Coast district of the United States while that is the home of Nuttal's sparrow.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW

(Zonotrichia albicollis)

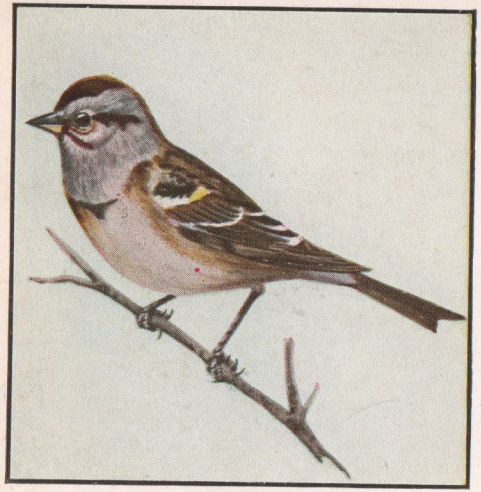
Length, 7¼ inches

The white-throated sparrow is not only considered the handsomest of the native sparrows, but by those who can judge, the sweetest singer of them all. Its high clear song note has intervals that conform closely to the musical scale. The call and alarm note is a metallic chirp. Though the white-throat is abundant, it is known only by its song to many who have never seen the bird. When it is seen, it is usually found scratching about among the leaves in the underbrush at the edge of a forest or along a hedgerow. This sparrow seems to prefer flitting about among the briars of old fence-corners. They are often seen with juncos and song sparrows. In the fall of the year the white-throated sparrow consumes many berries, which it picks off the vines and berry trees. It collects also the seeds of dried berries that have dried on the tree and fallen to the ground. In collecting weed seeds this sparrow hops about among the vines or tall weeds and carefully searches through the debris on the ground. The white-throated sparrow is valuable to the farmers, for it assists in keeping the weeds from over-running his crops. For this reason laws for its protection have been passed in all the States where this sparrow is found. It is a ground bird, always busy, and seemingly always happy.

The adult is readily recognized by the white throat, which gives it its name. In the young, this is less prominent and sometimes so very faint as to make close scrutiny necessary. White-throat's nest, which is usually placed on the ground along the border of some woods or in a swamp, is made of grass and leaves, and in it are laid five eggs, of a pale

greenish blue color, thickly spotted with brown. North America, east of the Rocky Mountains, is the range of the white-throated sparrow, the breeding ground being in that part that extends from the northern part of the United States to Labrador and the Hudson Bay country. It migrates and winters in companies, and its winter home is in the southern half of the United States. Many of the white-throated sparrows do not migrate until November. Some flocks remain all winter as far north as New Jersey and Ohio. There are some of these sparrows seen all winter in places north of this region. In suitable localities all over the South as far as the Gulf of Mexico they pass the colder months. Here they thrive and grow fat and sometimes are killed for food.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW



TREE SPARROW

TREE SPARROW

(Spizella monticola monticola)

Length, 5 ¾ inches

During the summer the tree sparrow is a resident of the Arctic region, and in winter it takes up its residence in the northern half of the United States east of the Plains. It usually appears in October and until spring may be seen in fields and gardens. The tree sparrow's crown is reddish brown with no black about the head. It has a blackish brown spot in the middle of the breast and considerable brown on the back and wings. From October until April, companies of three sparrows gather weed seeds, usually feeding near woods or along the hedgerows where they roost and rest. The song is strong, sweet, and musical and ends in a low warble. The call note is a musical chirp. Oddly, the tree sparrow usually builds its nest on the ground, but sometimes at a low elevation in a bush. Its eggs are pale greenish blue, specked with brown. Its breeding ground extends as far north as Labrador and the Hudson Bay.

CHIPPING SPARROW

(Spizella passerina passerina)

Length, 5 ¼ inches

Friendly as well as useful, the chipping sparrow, or chippy, as it is familiarly known, is probably the most widely known and loved of our native sparrows. Vines covering the sides of porches are favorite nesting places for this bird, provided it is not disturbed by cats or by the pugnacious English sparrow. The food of chippy is made up largely of insects, worms, and seeds, and its young are fed entirely upon insects. In its nest, which is small and cup-shaped and made of rootlets and lined with horsehair, early in May are laid three to five bluish-green eggs, speckled chiefly around the large end with blackish brown. The song of the chipping sparrow is a rapidly chanted *chip, chip, chip,* continued for several seconds, and this gives it its name. A sharp *chip* is its call note. Chippy has a chestnut crown and a black forehead with a black line through the eye. In appearance it is similar to the tree sparrow.

CHIPPING SPARROW

FIELD SPARROW

(Spizella pusilla pusilla)

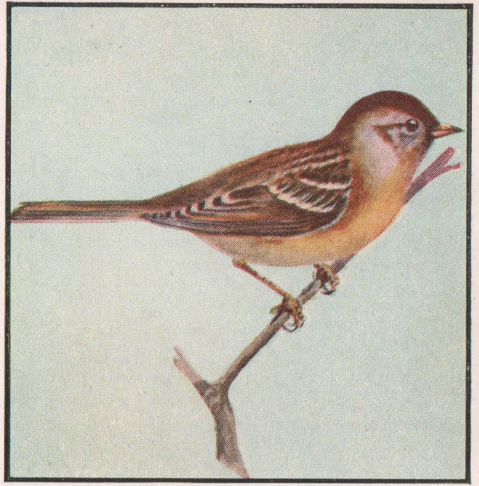
Length, 5¾ inches

Bush sparrow was the name applied to the field sparrow by the late Theodore Roosevelt, and this name, perhaps, gives a better picture of the bird's nature than does its book name. The field sparrow, chipping sparrow, and tree sparrow are near enough alike to confuse the inexperienced or hasty observer. Close observation with keen eyes will reveal certain characteristic marks. One can see the reddish bill and the plain breast of the field sparrow, the white stripe over each eye, the almost pure white breast and the grey rump of the chipping sparrow, and the dark spot in the middle of the breast of the tree sparrow. The field sparrow's habit of running along the ground and darting through the brush are characteristics which aid in its identification.

Dry pastures, stubble fields, and bushy side hills are favorite nesting and feeding places for the field sparrow. The hotter and drier the place, the more it seems to be favored by this bird. Often field sparrows will be found to be the only birds nesting on burned-over tracts of land where the sun is beating down with stifling heat. The nest of this bird is a frail structure of grass and weeds, lined with finer grasses, and is placed on the ground or in bushes, briars, or weed patches. There the female lays her four or five white eggs marked with reddish brown. As is the case with most of the members of the sparrow family, the field sparrow feeds principally on weed seeds but does not restrict itself to a rigid vegetable diet. In size and general appearance, the field sparrow is

Field Sparrow—Continued

somewhat like its cousins, the tree sparrow and the chipping sparrow. It has a pinkish brown bill. Its crown and ear coverts are brown, with no black markings. The back is reddish-brown and the breast and sides are tinged with brown. The field sparrow breeds from the Gulf States north to southern Canada and winters in the southern portions of the United States. The western field sparrow is grayer in general color and is to be found on the Great Plains. It has much longer wings and tail than its eastern relative. It breeds from Nebraska and South Dakota to eastern Montana and winters south to southern Texas and Louisiana. Worthen's sparrow or the Mexican field sparrow is a straggler from over the Mexican border into New Mexico. It is much like the western field sparrow but its tail is much shorter and the wing bands less distinct.



FIELD SPARROW

SLATE-COLORED JUNCO

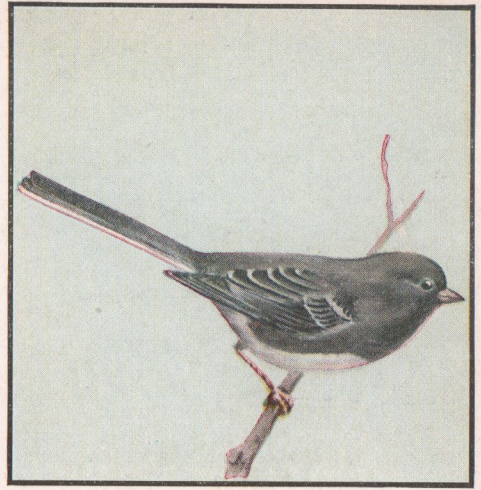
(Junco Hyemalis hyemalis)

Length, 6 inches

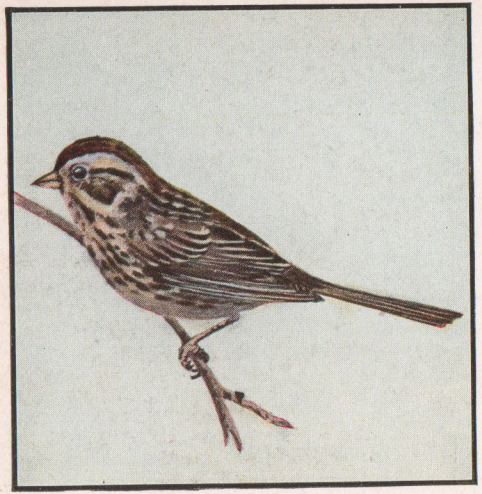
Slate gray, which blends with the gray winter skies and the snow-covered ground, is the prevailing color tone of the snow bird, as the slate-colored junco is popularly called. In most parts of the United States it is known only as a harbinger of winter, though it arrives early in September from its northern breeding grounds, and from that time until April, it is one of our commonest birds. Its song is a sweet, simple trill which is very effective when given by a flock in unison. It is recognized by its gray and white plumage and its flesh-colored bill. In flight, white outer tail feathers are visible. The junco is quite friendly, and comes into dooryards to feed on such crumbs or chaff as may be thrown out for it. It is a great consumer of weed seeds, and it eats insects of various kinds, including many harmful species, of which the caterpillar forms the largest item. The bird does no damage to fruit or grain. In its breeding ground, which extends northward from the extreme northern portions of the United States, will be found the junco's nest beside a stone, in a bunch of weeds, or under a small shrub, where it is well concealed. This is made of grasses, and in it are deposited three or four whitish eggs sprinkled with reddish brown. In migration it travels with other song birds, often being seen by the hundreds wherever there is shelter and food. In the breeding territory it chooses the cool and sheltered, and often damper localities. A common breeding place of the

Slate-Colored Junco—Continued

junco is in the Adirondacks. But farther south any mountainous region or valley that is almost cold throughout the summer may shelter a flock of juncos. The slate-colored or eastern junco occupies an area greater than any dozen varieties of the West. The eastern snow bird goes far up to the northwest sometimes to the limit of trees on the lower Coppermine and Mackenzie rivers. Many of them cross the Rocky Mountains up to the head waters of the Yukon river. Some of them fly through the Aleutian Islands to Siberia. Other varieties of juncos do not extend farther north than southern Alaska and northern British Columbia. The western varieties of juncos show all kinds of interesting variations of colors, but the habits of nesting, feeding and singing are all very much alike in all varieties.



SLATE-COLORED JUNCO



SONG SPARROW

SONG SPARROW

(Melospiza melodia melodia)

Length, 6½ inches

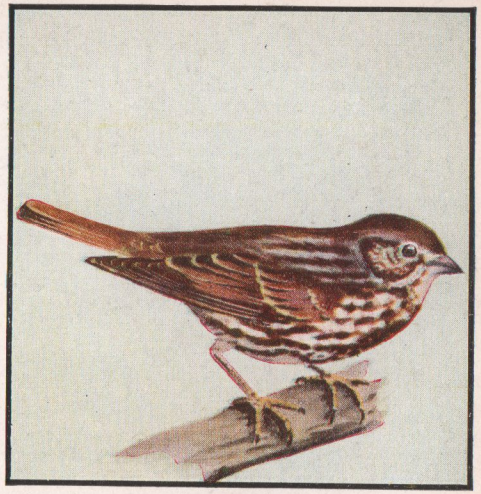
The song sparrow is one of the most popular, abundant, and widely distributed of the sparrow family. Being hardy, it often remains in the northern states throughout the winter, although the majority of these birds go farther south, returning northward about the first of March. It is the very pleasing and musical song, strongly resembling that of the canary, that gives this bird its name and makes it so popular a member of the bird world. The song sparrow is usually found in bushes, vines, and hedges but often appears also about the house, even in the larger cities. Its nest of grass is built on the ground or in a low bush. The eggs are bluish white spotted with brown, and number from three to five. The song sparrow breeds from Virginia and Missouri to southern Canada. In winter it migrates to the territory southward from Massachusetts and Ohio. Local relatives are found west of the Rocky Mountains.

FOX SPARROW

(Passerella iliaca iliaca)

Length, 6½ inches

In quiet swamps and open woods, the fox sparrow may be seen in winter, scratching energetically in the fallen leaves. It is one of the master musicians of the bird world. Its song is a loud, clear, and melodious carol, and is especially effective when sung in chorus by a large flock. The call note is a soft chirp. The fox sparrow's top coat is reddish brown and gray. Its rump and tail are wholly reddish brown and its breast and sides are spotted with the same color. The fox sparrow does its share in the destruction of harmful weed seeds which make up the bulk of its food supply. East of the Rocky Mountains and from New Brunswick and Manitoba northward, the fox sparrow will be found during its nesting season. During the winter it lives in the southern states. The nest is built of grass lined with fine grass and feathers. Four to five pale bluish-green eggs with reddish brown and chestnut spots are laid.



FOX SPARROW

TOWHEE

(Pipilo prythophthalmus erythophthalmus)

Length, 8 inches

Black, white, and brown is the garb of the male towhee, chewink, or ground robin, as it is variously known. Its mate wears a white and brown that blends so well with the leaves as to make her almost invisible. This bird is a ground bird and is found in swamps, bushy pastures, and open woodlands. Like the fox sparrow, the towhee is an energetic scratcher. This bird has two peculiarities which distinguish it from most of its kind. One is its method of scratching on the ground, an operation in which it uses its feet alternately, after the manner of the domestic hen. The towhee gets much of its food from foraging on the ground. The commotion it makes among the leaves is suggestive of the efforts of a much larger bird or a small rodent. The other peculiarity is the apparent disregard the towhee has for one who approaches the nest. This is decidedly unlike other birds. In the early spring, after the snow has disappeared, investigation of the rustling so often heard in the leaves along a fence, or in a thicket, usually reveals a towhee hard at work scratching for its dinner. Hibernating beetles and the young of other insects are the objects of its search. This early spring activity of the towhee is of great value, since the death of an insect at this time is equal to the destruction of a host later in the year. The towhee also is credited with being a frequent visitor to potato patches, where it wages war on the potato bug. Weed seeds and small wild fruit are its only vegetable foods and it never molests cultivated fruit or grain. The towhee breeds

Towhee—Continued

in eastern North America from the Gulf States to southern Canada. It migrates to the southern states for the winter. Strips of bark, grass and leaves are used by the towhee in building its nest which usually is placed on the ground but rarely in the bushes. Its eggs are white, or pale pink dotted with reddish brown. The cowbird seems to have a special preference for the nest of the towhee and seems to choose the latter to bring up her young more often than she does any other species. Frequently two or more cowbird's eggs have been found in a towhee's nest. The eggs of the two birds resemble each other, but the cowbird's egg is more likely to be smaller and to lack the pink tint which is a usual characteristic of the towhee's. Along the South Atlantic coast is found a relative with less white on the tail, and named from its white eyes, which distinguish it from the red-eyed species farther north.

TOWHEE

CALIFORNIA TOWHEE

(Pipilo crissalis crissalis)

Length, 9 inches

The California towhee, or crissal bunting, is a fluffy, brown, sparrow-like bird common in the southwest. Although it is shy and wary about its nesting grounds, when the family cares are over, it spends considerable time about the dooryard. It is often called the brown chippy, because of its persistent loud metallic chip whether heard in town or in mountain canyon. When given in concert in the canyons at dusk the song is said to be most effective. The entire upperparts of this bird are a dull grayish brown, slightly deeper on the head. The throat is light rufous and usually inclined to be dusky. When in flight, the short wings and long tail of this bird give it a bobbing, awkward motion. The nest is generally located in a bush or tree not high above the ground. It is made of inner bark, twigs, and weed stems, and is lined with plant stems and sometimes horse hair and wool. The eggs, four or five in number, are pale blue in color spotted with purplish brown. This towhee known throughout California as the California towhee, is a variety of the fuscous towhee. Ridway has seen enough differences in the two birds to make the California towhee a separate species, but Mrs. Bailey prefers to know it as a mere variety of the fuscous towhee. The Anthony towhee of southern California is another variety, having darker upperparts and grayer lowerparts than the California bird. The group of towhees known as the spotted towhees, of which the Oregon towhee is a member, is found in the western United States and Mexico among the chapparral. They are

California Towhee—Continued

very shy and refuse to stay where they can be observed. In southern California is found the San Diego towhee. It is a deep, glossy black bird with heavy white markings on the wings. The Arctic towhee has extensive white markings on both wings and tail and its shoulders are heavily streaked with white. These towhees are not numerous enough to inflict any great damage no matter what their habits might be. Abert's towhee is the largest of the plain towhees and is very shy. It lives among the mesquites and cottonwoods of the desert region of Arizona, New Mexico, and southeastern California. The green-tailed towhee is a beautiful bird with soft glossy coat touched with yellowish green. It is found principally in the mountain districts of western Unted States.

CALIFORNIA TOWHEE

CARDINAL

CARDINAL

(Cardinalis cardinalis cardinalis)

Length, 8¾ inches

Its striking plumage and rich, varied song make the cardinal, or redbird, an outstanding figure in the bird world. Although a southern bird, the cardinal is hardy and often remains throughout the winter in the northern part of its range. The bird is not commonly seen, however, in the northern United States. Though somewhat shy, the cardinal does not entirely avoid the vicinity of homes, though it prefers more secluded resorts. Wild shrubbery is its chosen haunt, but it also visits gardens, fields, and open woodlands, where it gleans it food supply of seeds, berries, fruits, and insects. The male bird wears a vivid red coat, has a large bill and a high crest. The color of the female is much duller and the crest is less prominent. The nest is a frail structure of twigs placed in a thicket or bush. Its eggs are greenish blue with reddish brown spots. Its breeding area extends from the Gulf of Mexico to New York and Iowa.

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK

(Zamelodia melanocephala)

Length, 8¼ inches

Although the black-headed grosbeak is a bird of the forest, it seems to prefer the deciduous trees and shrubbery for a nesting place. The male is a handsome bird, flashy in flight, with its black, white, and yellow contrast. It has a heavy short beak and long pointed wings. The male is a good housekeeper and relieves his mate when on the nest incubating the young and later helps to rear them. This grosbeak sometimes destroys early fruit and attacks peas and beans. Instead of being regarded as an enemy by western orchardists, however, the black-headed grosbeak should be esteemed as a friend, since it is a foe of some of the worst pests of horticulture, including scale insects, which compose a fourth of its food. The nest is a frail structure loosely put together with fine twigs, weed stems, grass, and rootlets. Three or four bluish-green eggs, speckled and blotched with chestnut, are laid.

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK

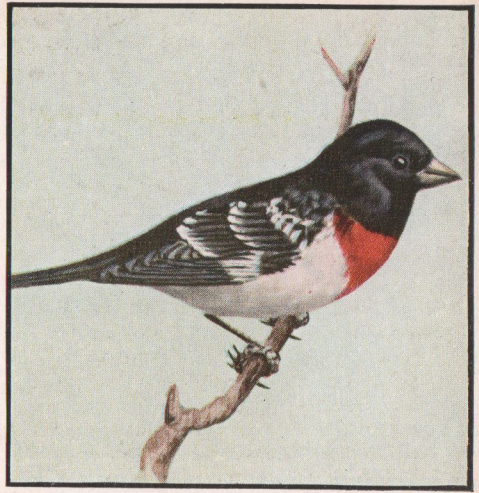
(Zamelodia ludoviciana)

Length, 8¼ inches

In the northern parts of the Eastern States, the rose-breasted grosbeak atones fully for what northerners lose as a result of the southerly distribution of the cardinal. Its beauty and song equal that of its southern rival, although there is a distinct difference. Almost all observers are impressed with the wholesomeness of this grosbeak. It is seldom nervous and does not permit trivial things to bother it. Cardinal-like, the male has a great attachment for his mate while she is on the nest. The male rose-breast, as its name indicates, has rose-colored feathers on its breast and on the underwing coverts. Its upperparts are black and white. The female resembles a large striped sparrow. Swamps and small patches of woods are the favorite haunts of the rose-breast. Sometimes this bird is found in orchards. It is not very active and does not move about much and can be easily traced by its song, a rich, full, whistling carol nearly always beginning with a sharp *chip*. Its call note is a deep-toned chirp. Although the song of the rose-breast is somewhat like that of the robin, it has a more flowing, joyous quality. This bird is noted for its clear melodious notes, which are poured forth in generous measure. The rosebreast sings even at mid-day during summer, when the intense heat has silenced almost every other songster. Unlike the robin, the rose-breast often sings when in flight.

Rose-Breasted Grosbeak - Continued

The nest of this grosbeak is a loose, frail cradle of twigs hung in a tree at a low elevation or in a thicket. Its eggs are bluish green spotted with brown. The northern half of the United States and southern Canada, east of the Rocky Mountains, is the breeding ground of the rose-breasted grosbeak, and its winter quarters are in Central America. The rose-breasted grosbeak is held in high esteem because of its habit of preying upon the Colorado potato bug. At least one-tenth of its food is made up of these potato-eating beetles. It not only eats the adults but also consumes the larvae and feeds a great many to the nestlings. The vegetable food of the grosbeak consists of buds and blossoms of forest trees and seeds. The rose-breasted grosbeak's beautiful plumage and sweet song are not its sole claim to favor, for few birds are more beneficial to agriculture.



ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK

INDIGO BUNTING

(Passerina cyanea)

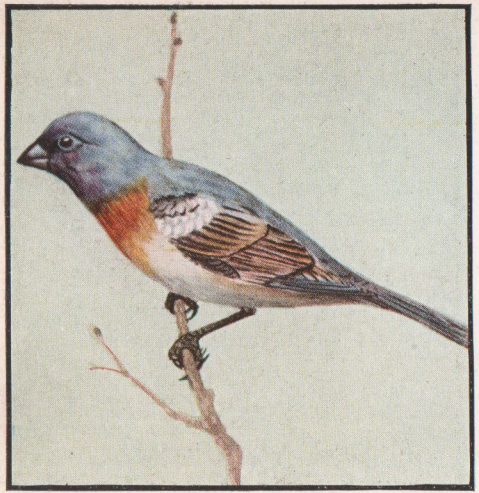
Length, 5¾ inches

In the pastures, along the edges of swamps, or along roadsides that are lined with trees or bushes, you will meet the indigo bunting, a jolly summer songster, any time between the latter part of May and September. It is said that no bird outside the tropics has such an unusual blue as the male indigo bunting. The bird is a deep ultramarine blue, and seems to be variously colored when viewed in different lights. At least there is no reason to confuse it with other blue birds. A general description would read: Front of head and chin, rich indigo-blue, greener on back and underparts; wings dusky brown, with blue edges to the coverts; tail feathers also blue-edged; bill and feet dark; general shape, rounded and canary-like, resembling the goldfinch. The female is brownish in color, with a faint tinge of blue on wings and tail. The male usually has some favorite perch upon which he spends a large part of his time singing. This perch is nearly always at the top of a tall bush or tree. Being a very showy bird he seems not to miss a chance to exhibit himself on a fence rail or tilting on the reeds or dodging about in a flock of English sparrows. The bunting belongs to the tree-loving and tree-nesting part of its tribe. Its size ranks with that of the smaller sparrows, coming between the field and song sparrows and being only slightly larger than the chipping sparrow. The song of this bunting is a sprightly little warble with many canary-like notes. Its call note is a sharp chirp.

Indigo Bunting—Continued

The indigo bunting is most abundant east of the Mississippi River, although it ranges over all of the United States east of the Rocky Mountains and breeds as far north as Manitoba and New Brunswick. Four or five pale bluish-white eggs are laid in a nest made of grasses and placed at a low elevation in a shrub or bush. In winter, the indigo lives in the tropical Central American countries. The bunting's food consists mainly of seeds and berries with a goodly number of insects. Among the insects are found caterpillars, click beetles, snout-beetles and bugs of various kinds. The indigo bunting is one of our most valuable species and should be given rigid protection. Another beautiful bunting is the lazuli bunting which inhabits the western United States.

INDIGO BUNTING



LAZULI BUNTING

LAZULI BUNTING

(Passerina amoena)

Length, 6 inches

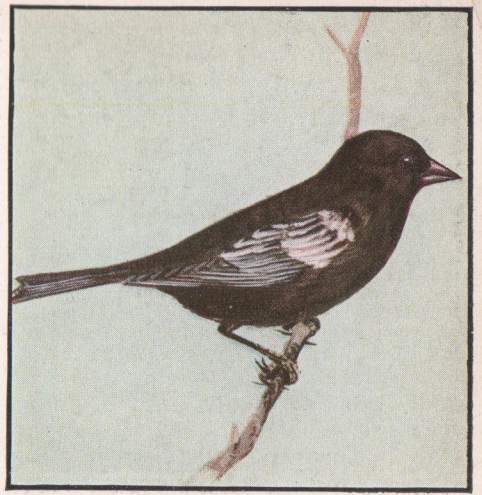
The lazuli bunting is a handsome songster of the mountains and valleys, and in the far West it replaces its indigo cousin of the East. A lover of the foothills, it is seldom found very high in the mountains. The most distinguishing feature of the male bird is the blue head, including the throat, breast, and shoulders. The lazuli bunting's habits are like those of the indigo bunting and it frequents the same kind of territory, usually building its nest in a bush or in the lower branches of a tree only a few feet from the ground. Its eggs are very pale bluish white. The range and breeding ground of this bird take in the western part of the United States from the Great Plains to the Pacific coast and north along the coast to British Columbia. In winter, the lazuli moves south into Mexico. It is a southern bird of such a quiet manner that it is not very well known.

LARK BUNTING

(Calamospiza melanocorys)

Length, 7¾ inches

Methodical and apparently well organized as a species, the lark bunting usually travels in large flocks even at nesting time, all members of the flock taking wing or alighting at the same time. The male lark bunting is black and white and the female is brown and gray. The white-winged "blackbird," as it is sometimes called, has a habit similar to that of the skylark of mounting into the air while singing and then descending on set wings. The song is a lively, sweetly modulated warble. Under a tuft of grass or a small bush, the lark bunting conceals its nest, and in it are laid four or five bluish eggs. The lark bunting is found most abundantly in the western United States from Kansas and Colorado north to Manitoba. On the breeding grounds these birds are rather shy in habits, especially the females. They are found frequently feeding silently among the flowers on the prairie.



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