

58. *Herodias alba egretta* (Gmel.) Ridgw. AMERICAN EGRET.—A number of this snow-white species were observed in the swamps across the "lake" from Vicksburg. One was shot, and was found to have the long dorsal train of plumes.

59. *Oxyechus vociferus* (Linn.) Reich. KILLDEER.—Observed only at Vicksburg. Will probably be found to breed here.

60. *Philohela minor* (Gmel.) Gray. AMERICAN WOODCOCK.—One specimen was shot at Vicksburg.

61. *Sterna antillarum* (Less.) Coues. LEAST TERN.—This beautiful little Tern was very abundant on a sandy point across the "lake," or old bend of the river, opposite Vicksburg. We were told that these birds lay their eggs on the bare sand, and that these eggs hatch in an extraordinarily short time.

IMPRESSIONS OF SOME SOUTHERN BIRDS.

BY WILLIAM BREWSTER.

LOOKING back on my first winter in the South I can recall no pleasanter experience than that of a stay of some four weeks at St. Mary's, a town situated on the very border line of Southern Georgia. This place was then scarcely known to Northerners, although the crowded Florida steamers, on their way across Cumberland Sound, passed within sight of it and occasionally even touched at its wharf for some chance freight or a supply of fuel. But the village still retained a primitive quiet and simplicity that was all the more restful from its contrast with the bustling world outside. Now there are rumors of a railroad and daily trains from Savannah, with all the accompanying desecrations. It is a pity that the march of modern improvements cannot spare a few such peaceful spots, but the "levelling process" seems universal and inevitable.

A Northerner passing his first spring in the South will miss the marked distinction between the seasons upon which he has been accustomed to rely. The vegetation does indeed take a partial rest during the winter months, but it is checked rather than suppressed, and the reign of summer begins without that interval of preparation which we call spring. Most of the trees

are evergreen, but some of them, curiously enough, assume bright autumn tints and cast their leaves in April. This at least is true of the live-oaks and magnolias: during my stay at St. Mary's one of the latter, a remarkably fine tree which I often passed in my daily walks, was at one time nearly denuded, while the ground beneath was strewn with scarlet and orange-tinted leaves.

By the middle of April the fields and forests wore that mature appearance which we associate with August and early September. At noonday cicadas shrilled in the sultry woods, and crickets chirped all night long in the shrubbery about the house. Yet few birds had begun to nest, and many of the northern ones still lingered. I saw Yellow-rumped Warblers, Blue Yellow-backed Warblers and Cedar Birds nearly to the end of April, and a White-throated Sparrow as late as May 2. Many of the Blue Yellow-backed Warblers remained to breed, or rather *were breeding*, for long before this (on April 9) I had found a nearly finished nest. The local birds, however, did not mingle with the strangers, the former being found in pairs, and only where the trees were hung with Spanish moss; while the latter occurred in all kinds of timber, and in flocks made up largely of Redstarts, Kinglets, Black-poll Warblers and other northern species. The same was true of the Catbirds, Brown Thrushes, Pine Warblers, Towhees and several others. It was especially marked in the case of the Towhees, for the resident individuals belonged to a different and readily recognizable race.

One needed but to pass the boundaries of St. Mary's to be fairly in the country, for the village had not then overflowed its limits, and the few outlying plantations were scarcely less wild and unkempt than the woods which surrounded them. One of my favorite haunts was the "Bay-gall" (I could never learn the origin of this name), a tract of swampy forest less than a quarter of a mile distant from the house at which we were staying. This place was sure to be alive with birds, and I rarely entered it without making some pleasing discovery. My first visit was on April 6, the day after our arrival. As I approached the woods a Red-bellied Woodpecker started from a solitary tree within a few feet of my head, and alighting at the base of one near by scrambled hurriedly up, dislodging the scales of loose bark in his ascent. He was immediately joined by his mate and

the two began a game of hide-and-peek around the trunk and among the branches, uttering a rolling *wor'r'r'roo* very like that of a Flicker.

Forcing my way through the brambly outskirts, I entered the swamp and paused a moment to look around. Grand old water-oaks and sweet-gums thickly hung with Spanish moss cast a dense shade over the ground beneath, and the few sunbeams that struggled through flickered in the gloom like dying torches. There was little undergrowth, and the eye could penetrate far in every direction. In the branches above Blue Yellow-backed Warblers were singing incessantly, and occasionally the note of a Great-crested Flycatcher echoed sharply among the trees. There were other sounds; the rolling tapping of Woodpeckers, the shrill cry of the Blue Jay; and, from the clearing outside, pleasantly softened by distance, the songs of Mockingbirds and Cardinal Grosbeaks.

Passing deeper into the forest I came to an opening where the morning sun lay warm on a thicket of bushes that surrounded a shallow pool. Here I found an interesting little company of tired migrants resting after the fatigues of their last night's journey and preparing for that still before them. There were six or eight Hooded Warblers, all males in full spring livery, a number of Worm-eating Warblers, a female Prothonotary Warbler, and several Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Redstarts. All were busily engaged in catching insects, but occasionally one of them would pause to sing a few notes in a listless undertone. The Prothonotary was the first that I had ever met with, and it was the only one that I saw at St. Mary's. The Hooded and Worm-eating Warblers were common for a week or more afterwards, when all departed for some more northern breeding-ground.

During subsequent visits to the "Bay-gall" I met many interesting birds, several of which were new to me. Occasionally I would startle a Chuck-will's-widow from its noonday slumbers on some mossy knoll, and if a chance shot through the leaves succeeded in stopping its erratic, bat-like flight, there was the pleasure of smoothing its soft plumage and admiring the rich brown coloring before consigning the bird to the paper wrapper that formed its temporary tomb. I believe I never shot one without indulging myself in this way. There is much to be learned, too, from the examination of a freshly-killed bird. For instance,

I had never known the wonderful beauty of this Goat-sucker's eye until I held the bird in my hand, and the size of its mouth would hardly be suspected from the examination of a dried skin.

On April 17 the Acadian Flycatchers arrived. I was first made aware of their presence by their emphatic *queep' leep* which so closely resembled that of Traill's Flycatcher that I immediately suspected the identity of the singers, although it was some time before I could get a sight at one. They had another note also which was much like the whistling of wings. I afterwards satisfied myself that this sound was a vocal one.

I never left the "Bay-gall" without reluctance in the days when I was perhaps the only invader of its secret recesses; and now, in recalling it, the feeling is scarcely less strong. But the country about St. Mary's held other attractions which must not be neglected. The open space surrounding the town was bordered on the north by a pine forest that stretched an indefinite number of miles into the interior, and my walks often tended in this direction. Following some grass-grown road that wandered aimlessly among the trees, I often paused to watch the gambols of the Brown-headed Nuthatches which fairly swarmed in these woods. They are exceedingly social little birds, and it was no uncommon thing, even in the middle of their breeding season, to see five or six rollicking together. In their motions they closely resemble *Sitta canadensis*, and they have the same habit of exploring the ends of the pine branches and hanging head downward, like Titmice, among the tufts of pine needles. But they are decidedly more active, and their notes are shriller, more varied and altogether unlike those of either the Red or White-bellied species. *Whick-whick-whee'e'e' whick-whicker-whicker* is the usual utterance, but when several come together their shrill excited piping altogether baffles description. These little companies were by no means wholly composed of Nuthatches, but usually included a more or less numerous escort of Pine Warblers, Bluebirds, Titmice and Woodpeckers. As the motley troop rambled through the woods, its members were continually chasing one another from tree to tree, chirping, calling and singing as their various moods dictated. I noticed that the Bluebirds usually led the van, while the Woodpeckers invariably brought up the rear. Unlike the Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy and Golden-winged species, which inhabited all sorts of timber, the Red-cockaded

Woodpecker was exclusively a bird of the pines. It was not common about St. Mary's and I had difficulty in getting as many specimens as I wanted. Its notes to my ear almost exactly resembled those of *Sitta pusilla*. On the 1st of May I started a female from her nesting-hole, which was about thirty feet above the ground in a large and apparently perfectly sound pine. I was unable to climb the tree but the bird acted as if her eggs had already been laid.

The pine lands of the South have an open park-like character that is a continual surprise to one accustomed only to New England forests. The trees rarely stand in close proximity to one another, and they are often so widely scattered that the general effect is that of an opening rather than a forest. Unless a hummock interrupts the view, the eye may sometimes roam for half-a-mile in every direction over a perfectly level plain, interspersed with occasional trees whose tufted heads throw waving shadows upon the bright green beds of saw-palmetto that cover most of the ground beneath. Were it not for the half-wild cattle that range at will through the country, the palmetto would probably usurp every inch of ground; but these creatures keep it within reasonable limits, and many spaces of closely cropped grass and stunted blueberries intervene. About such places I used to find the Bachman's Finch, a retiring little bird which might easily be overlooked by one unacquainted with its habit of skulking among the herbage and lying concealed until nearly trodden on. But no one with the slightest ear for bird music can long remain in ignorance of its presence after the breeding-season has set in, for the male possesses vocal powers of a very rare order. His song is a prolonged, leisurely chant composed of several distinct bars or sets of notes, with brief pauses between, as if the bird stopped to take breath. The final notes of each bar have sometimes a rising, sometimes a falling, inflection, and the tone is varied in the most subtle manner. Now it has a full bell-like ring that seems to fill the air around; next it is soft and low and inexpressibly tender; now it is clear again, but so modulated that the sound seems to come from a great distance. The whole performance is very simple and I hardly know the secret of its charm. To be fully appreciated it should be heard in the soft twilight of an April evening, when the still woods are filled with dusky shadows. At such times it has moved me more deeply than I care to confess.

The male always sings from an elevated perch, usually a dead twig close to the trunk of a southern pine. He sits perfectly motionless and is unaccountably hard to see. I have often stood directly beneath one for several minutes, vainly straining my eyes in the direction from whence the sound came, and perhaps finally discovered him within ten feet of my head in plain view. The ventriloquous character of many of his notes increases this difficulty. If disturbed in the midst of his song, he pitches to the ground beneath and at once seeks shelter in the grass.

Another characteristic inhabitant of these grassy openings was the Meadow Lark. It was much tamer than our northern bird, and its notes had a wild, ringing inflection that harmonized well with the surroundings.

In the thicker groves I often heard the voice of the Summer Tanager (*Pyrranga aestiva*). His song is rich, flowing, and not unlike that of the Rose-breasted Grosbeak, although some of its notes recall those of the Robin. The call-note used by both sexes is a peculiar *chuck'l-chuck'l'ut*. The bright colors of the male make him a conspicuous object among the branches of the southern pine which, at least in Georgia, is his favorite tree.

The Yellow-throated Warbler also was sure to be met with in these walks. His song to my ear has a far-a-way sound, even when the bird is near at hand. It is simple and monotonous, but nevertheless sweet and plaintive. This bird has all the habits of the Pine Warbler, with which it often associates.

A totally different phase of bird-life was presented when, as was often the case, I visited the plantations. The fields themselves rarely offered anything more attractive than Yellow-winged Sparrows, Grass Finches and, late in April, migratory troops of Bobolinks that settled among the last year's weeds for a moment before resuming their northward journey with rollicking snatches of song. But the fence corners and similar neglected places around the outskirts of the cultivated lands were filled with bushes over which trailed Cherokee roses, trumpet-vines and other luxuriant creepers. In these places I was sure to find Mockingbirds, Cardinals, Catbirds, Brown Thrushes, White-eyed Vireos and the brilliant little Painted Buntings.

Next to the always self-assertive Mockingbird the White-eyed Vireo was perhaps the most conspicuous inhabitant of such thickets. Not that he was often seen, but at almost any time of

the day one might hear his emphatic, jerky little strain, coming from half-a-dozen points at once. I noticed that the note varied considerably from that which we hear in New England, and, moreover, scarcely two of the southern birds sang exactly alike. Some individuals even seemed to have a talent for mimicry. One that I remember imitated the note of the Loggerhead Shrike so closely that I was completely deceived. The nest of this bird is a wonderfully delicate and beautiful structure. One that I got at St. Mary's contained its complement of four eggs on April 26. I discovered it twelve days previously when the birds were busily employed on the framework. The male took an equal part in this task and it was amusing to see him try to sing with his bill full of moss or bark.

The Painted Buntings or Nonpareils, as they are universally called by the townspeople, arrived April 23 and through the remainder of the month were abundant. I used to find them in flocks about the openings where they spent much of their time on the ground. They were timid rather than shy, flying to the thickets upon the slightest alarm, but when once conscious of being pursued, it was difficult to get a shot at one. The brilliant plumage of the adult male makes him a conspicuous object either on the ground or in green foliage, but it is no easy matter to see one among the flowers of the trumpet-vine where they often seek refuge, apparently fully conscious of the protection afforded by the clusters of scarlet blossoms. The young males during the first year are colored precisely like the females. They sing, and for aught I know, breed, while in this condition. The song is a low, pleasing warble very un-Finch-like in character. I should compare it to that of the Canada Flycatcher, but the notes are less emphatic, though equally disconnected. The bird almost invariably sings in the depths of some thicket, and its voice ceases at the slightest noise. Both sexes have a sharp chirp of alarm which closely resembles that of the Indigo Finch. Most of the Nonpareils left St. Mary's by May 1, but a few pairs remained up to the time of my departure, when they were apparently preparing to breed. Another familiar inhabitant of these thickets was the Towhee Bunting. Two distinct races of this bird were to be met with during the same walk, but never, so far as my observation went, actually in company. The Red-eyed or northern form, *erythrophthalmus* proper, apparently occurred only as a winter

visitor, while var. *alleni* represented the resident or local race. The latter was chiefly a bird of the oak scrub, although it was also to be found in open pine woods where it haunted the beds of saw-palmetto. Its note differed widely from that of *erythro-phthalmus*; the "chewink" was shorter and harsher, and in addition to this cry, both sexes occasionally uttered a sharp, clear whistle that sounded like a sportsman's call to his dog. I am not sure that I heard the song, or at least identified it. These Towhees were hard to obtain, for they were shy and retiring, rarely venturing far from their secure retreats. The irides of all the specimens that I examined were brownish-yellow or dull, opaque amber; never white, as is said to be the case with examples from Southern Florida.

It would be difficult to find a plantation in the South that did not have one or more pairs of Mockingbirds. About St. Mary's they were especially abundant, and nowhere more so than in the gardens of the village. Here they were half-domesticated, building their nests in the shrubbery that surrounded the houses, and hopping about, like Robins, upon the grass-plats and gravelled walks. An orange tree directly in front of the windows of my room was appropriated by a remarkably fine singer. There is a noticeable difference in the performances of most males, but the voice of this bird possessed a compass and perfection of tone that I have never heard equalled. His repertoire included the notes of nearly all the birds of the surrounding region besides many of the characteristic village sounds, and most of the imitations were simply perfect. Moreover he was continually adding to his accomplishments. An interesting instance of this occurred one afternoon, when several of us were sitting on the veranda. A Greater Yellow-leg passing over the town was attracted by my answering whistle, and circled several times above the house reiterating his mellow call. The Mockingbird up to this time had been singing almost uninterruptedly, but at the sound of these strange notes he relapsed into silence and retreated into the thickest foliage of his favorite tree; after a while we heard him trying them in an undertone. The first note came pretty readily, but the falling inflection of the succeeding three troubled him. Whenever I ventured to prompt he would listen attentively, and at the next attempt show an evident improvement. Finally he abandoned the task, as we thought in

despair, and at sunset that evening for the first and only time during my stay his voice was missing in the general chorus. But at daylight the next morning the garden rang with a perfect imitation of the Yellow-leg's whistle. He had mastered it during the night, and ever afterwards it was his favorite part. The discomfiture of the rival males in the neighborhood was as amusing as it was unmistakable. Each in turn tried it, but not one of them succeeded.

Another frequenter of the village shrubbery was the Orchard Oriole. His flute-like voice, which bears some resemblance to that of the Fox Sparrow, could be heard almost any time after April 10. Our garden offered especial attractions to these Orioles, for the hedge of wild olive trees that bordered it on two sides was overrun with Cherokee roses and trumpet-vines among which they found a congenial shelter. They were fond, too, of sipping the honey from the trumpet-flowers, and it was no uncommon thing to see half-a-dozen collected about a single cluster. In this occupation they were almost invariably joined by numerous Hummingbirds;—and such a group, with its setting of green leaves and scarlet and white blossoms, formed the prettiest picture imaginable.

To our garden also came the Blue Jays; bold, familiar birds very different in bearing from the outcast that boys and would-be sportsmen pursue so relentlessly in the northern woods. Everywhere at the South this Jay is as much an inhabitant of the cultivated grounds as of the forests, and if not actually encouraged, it is universally tolerated. In Jacksonville I have heard them screaming among the live-oaks that shade the busiest streets, and at St. Mary's they were scarcely less tame and confiding than the Mockingbirds.

The average Georgian is indifferent to the shooting of most of the birds that inhabit his plantation; but it is little short of a crime in his eyes to take the life of either a Turkey Buzzard or a Mockingbird. The killing of one of the former is considered an offence against the State, which protects them on account of their services as scavengers. But the Mockingbirds are treasured as personal property, and any interference with them is sure to be promptly resented. The natural result of this sentiment is that both species are universally abundant and familiar. The Buzzards, especially, are ubiquitous. At

all hours of the day, in every kind of weather, they float over the cities, villages, plantations, pine woods, hummocks, cypress swamps, salt marshes and even the beaches of the Sea-islands. Go where you will, it is almost impossible to look upward without seeing the picturesque forms drifting about in the sky. Some are soaring almost beyond the reach of human vision. Others at a lower elevation cross and recross each other in interminable mazy lines; while still others glide across the landscape passing just above the tops of the trees. Both species occurred at St. Mary's, but the Black Vulture was much the less common. It associated freely with the Turkey Buzzards, among which it could be recognized at almost any distance by its different color, shape and manner of flying. The tail is so short as to be altogether out of proportion with the body and wings, while its square tip gives it the appearance of having been cut off. This bird's flight is heavy, awkward and generally straight forward, although it occasionally soars. The wings are flapped every few seconds in a hurried, nervous manner that seems to betoken a lack of power or confidence. The flight of the Turkey Buzzard, on the contrary, is a picture of repose in motion. The bird rarely moves its wings, save to alter their inclination, and its dark form drifts through miles of space without the slightest perceptible effort. The impression of entire freedom from exertion which its movements convey, is curiously in accord with the general enervating influence of southern life and its surroundings. Its impassive flight may perhaps be regarded as the most characteristic feature of a southern landscape, as it certainly is one of the most attractive. But the observer who would keep this impression untarnished will be wise to refrain from looking too closely into the *useful* side of the bird's character.

The Buzzard's flight will not bear comparison however with that of the Swallow-tailed Kite. The latter is equally easy and graceful of wing, and, in addition, its movements are characterized by a certain dash and energy of purpose that one looks for in vain in the calm, emotionless flight of the Vulture. I hardly know a more attractive sight than that presented by one of these Kites playing about an opening in the woods. For a moment it floats motionless, as if suspended by an invisible wire; the next, it glides close over the ground crossing and recrossing every yard

of space. The long, thin wings, firmly set, cleave the air like knife-blades and the forked tail, spread to its fullest, is inclined to one side or the other as the bird changes its swift course. When it turns, the snowy head and breast are contrasted against the green background and its steel blue back glances in the sunlight. Finally rising to a level with the tree-tops it is gone as it came, like a beautiful vision.

But my space is exhausted, although many interesting birds remain to be mentioned. Perhaps at some future time I may take up the threads where this sketch leaves them.

NOTES ON SOME OF THE RARER BIRDS OF SOUTHERN NEW BRUNSWICK.

BY MONTAGUE CHAMBERLAIN.

1. *Sialia sialis*. BLUEBIRD.—About the middle of March, 1877, Mr. Harold Gilbert saw one at Mount Pleasant, a suburb of St. John. Some time early in June, 1879, Mr. J. W. Banks saw one at Milledgeville, with food in its mouth, apparently for its young. On April 26, 1881, Mr. Henry Gilbert shot one at Rothesay, nine miles north of St. John.
2. *Dendroeca pennsylvanica*. CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER.
3. *Dendroeca castanea*. BAY-BREASTED WARBLER.
4. *Dendroeca Blackburnæ*. BLACKBURN'S WARBLER.—These three species are but rarely found here. In my note-book is a record of one of each taken during the summer of 1881, and I can learn of none others having been seen or heard.
5. *Vireo noveboracensis*. WHITE-EYED VIREO.—Mr. Harold Gilbert shot one specimen of this bird at South Bay, a few miles northwest from St. John, on May 24, 1877, and this is the only known instance of its occurrence in this vicinity.
6. *Pyrranga rubra*. SCARLET Tanager.—I saw an adult male of this species sitting on a fence in the suburbs of St. John on June 20, 1879, and have examined two specimens taken near Hampton during the summer of 1880.
7. *Ammodromus caudacutus*. SHARP-TAILED FINCH.—On June 21, 1881, five individuals of this species were taken by Mr. H. A. Purdie, Mr. Fred. W. Daniel and myself, on a marsh near Hampton. This marsh is watered by the Kenebecasis, a tributary of the St. John, and lies some twenty-five miles up the former river. The junction of the two rivers