

the doctors disagreed, the proceedings to be published in the NUTTALL BULLETIN and the congressmen to bind themselves to abide by the decision of the majority. The plan seemed to him perfectly feasible, and probably the only way to secure the greatly desired uniformity of nomenclature. Not forgetting to inquire politely respecting our "Ornithological Bibliography," the progress of which, he understood, had been arrested by the War Department at Washington, and begging to be remembered to all absent Nuttallians, *Surnia* bowed gravely and withdrew.

Among all our callers there was not one who did not ask particularly after our beloved and respected Editor-in-chief, expressing the warmest sympathy with him in his long illness, and their sincere hopes for his speedy and perfect restoration to health.

NEW BRUNSWICK NOTES.

BY M. CHAMBERLAIN.

Among other interesting ornithological occurrences with which the year 1882 favored observers in the vicinity of St. John was the presence of some six pairs of Pine Grosbeaks (*Pinicola enucleator*) during the entire summer, in a heavy growth of mixed woods, covering the crest of a hill overlooking the Kennebecasis River a few miles from the city.

They were first seen on June 11, when Mr. James W. Banks accidentally shot a female in the very act of arranging some dry grass on a partially formed nest. It was placed in a small spruce some seven feet from the ground and close to the trunk. About a handful of this grass, unmixed with other material, had been laid firmly upon a limb, not woven together, but appearing more like a platform for the main structure to rest upon, than the bottom of a nest. When first seen the male and female were together gathering grass on a hummock close by, and both seemed equally busy. When his mate was killed the male became much excited and exhibited deep distress, continuing for some time within three or four feet of Mr. Banks, as he sat examining the dead bird, and once alighting on a bough close to his head and

peering over his shoulder. Upon dissecting the female the eggs were found to be in an advanced condition.

During the season the remaining pairs were seen very often and closely watched, but though they were undoubtedly mated no completed nest was discovered. As the birds were exceedingly tame and easy to approach, their plumage was closely examined. No red coloring was observable, and so little difference was apparent between the males and the females that the sex could not be determined without the aid of a glass, at more than ten paces distant. During the breeding season they sang occasionally but not loudly, their song being a short and rather simple, though sweet-toned melody, which increased in strength of tone and duration toward autumn.

Last spring the Song Sparrow and the Fox Sparrow reversed the usual order of their coming, for on March 6, while we were looking for the appearance of the latter, the former species arrived in the vicinity of St. John in large flocks, accompanied by a few of their White-throated cousins.

In 1881 the Song Sparrow first appeared here on April 11, which is about an average date for their arrival. From the time of their coming in 1882 until late in April they must have been sorely pinched for food, for winter was still with us, and cold snow-storms were of frequent occurrence. During this period the birds were constantly about the streets of the city, and in the early morning thronged the wharves and busiest thoroughfares. They were also found along the shore, but their chief resort was the large tract of sand flats at the back of the town, which at low water are bare, but with each recurrence of the tide are covered by the waters of the Bay of Fundy. The mouths of the sewers emptying upon these sea-washed sands were the favorite feeding places for all the early comers, and through April a rather motley company were daily seen there together. Snow-birds, Fox, Song, and White-throated Sparrows, Robins, and Purple Finches, became shore-birds for the time, and about the middle of the month a party of Hermit Thrushes added their dignified presence to the gathering, while a squad of Crows gravely stalked about as undisturbed as if always accustomed to such high-bred society, their sombre coloring forming a marked contrast with the white plumes of the Herring Gulls who posed for a background just where the incoming waves curled and broke upon the sands.

It was among one of these groups, feeding nearest the seaward point of the flats, that Mr. Alfred Morrissey discovered a flock of Ipswich Sparrows (*Passerculus princeps*) on April 11. The species was new to this locality, for Mr. Brewster's solitary individual, taken at Point Lepreaux in April, 1876 (as recorded in this Bulletin, Vol. I, p. 52), is the only instance of its occurrence previously known. Of the birds as they appeared to Mr. Morrissey he says: "When I first saw the Ipswich Sparrows they were in company with Song Sparrows, their actions being so nearly identical that the species could only be distinguished by the difference in the length of the tail and the general color of the plumage, that of the Ipswich being somewhat the lighter.

"There were some twenty individuals in the flock, and, as they were very tame, allowing me to approach within a few yards, I was enabled to easily watch their movements during the few days they remained, they feeding always in one locality. Most of the weather while they were here was stormy, but they appeared indifferent to it and were very active, picking about in the sand, even in a snow-squall, hopping around and taking short flights, all the while uttering a sharp chirp, but not attempting any song. Of the few specimens I secured, one was merely wounded, and I placed it in a cage with a Canary, where it lived for a week, being fed during the entire time by the Canary. It was exceedingly tame, allowing one's hand to be put in the cage without disturbing it in the slightest degree."

The Fox Sparrows did not put in an appearance in the vicinity of St. John until "April-fool's day," a full week after the Wild Geese were first seen going northward. They are rarely observed here after the third week in March, but this year they remained fully a month later. By the fifth day of April they had gathered in immense numbers and were in full song. Everywhere about the city and suburbs, and at all hours, in the early dawn and in the gloaming as well as at noonday, alike indifferent to storm or sunshine, they sang as if singing were the end and aim of their existence. But theirs is a song that one does not soon tire of; indeed to my ear it is more beautiful than that of any other member of the family, entitling the species to high rank among our northern songsters. Of course such eminent performers as the Winter Wren and Hermit Thrush take precedence, and in the song of the present bird we miss many qualities for which other

species are admired. Its voice has neither the compass of the Catbird's nor the volume of the Purple Finch's, while it lacks the free abandon of the Bobolink's and the sentiment so sweetly voiced by the Vireo when he "whispers his secrets to the passing breeze." The chief characteristics of the song of the Fox Sparrow are sweetness and purity of tone, and rare beauty of expression; and in these he stands the peer of the ablest of his rivals.

When I included the Indigo Bird in my catalogue of the Birds of New Brunswick I had some misgivings as to its right to a place there; but that right has been established by an example taken at Rothesay by Mr. Henry Gilbert, in May last, and by others observed by Mr. Gould. On the 24th of the same month the occurrence of the Bluebird near St. John was confirmed, for I shot a pair at Westfield, evidently mated. I also know of numerous others having been taken or seen during the summer.

In May a small flock of Ring-necked Plover (*Ægialites semipalmatus*) and Peeps (*Actodromas minutilla*) spent a few days near St. John; although both of these species are very abundant here for several weeks in the autumn they have not before been known to occur in the spring. Piping Plover (*Ægialites melodus*) too were taken here last spring for the first time, though I am not certain that more than four specimens were observed. Two of these were shot by the Baron de Tnyll, and are now in the collection of the Natural History Society here.

The Titlark (*Anthus ludovicianus*) must also be added to the list of species occurring in St. John County, as numerous large flocks were seen here in October last.

Another of the occurrences for which the year is remarkable is that of a Whistling Swan (*Cygnus americanus*), one having been secured by George Barnhill, Esq., on April 8, at Belvidere Lake about twenty miles northwest from St. John. It was in immature plumage, but the sex was not ascertained. When first seen it was on the wing a short distance behind a flock of Wild Geese, and it followed these into an opening in the Lake, though keeping entirely separate from them.

The late records in the Bulletin by Mr. Harry Merrill and others, regarding the rarity of *Lomvia tricile*, prompt me to add my quota of information, which will support the facts already recorded, as I have known of but two examples of this species occurring in this vicinity in ten years. There is not, however,

near St. John, any good collecting ground for this class of sea-birds; for many species reported as common at the mouth of the Bay of Fundy have not been taken here. *L. arra bruennichi* is an example of these.

From several letters received I am led to suspect that the correctness of the statement, made in my catalogue, that the Hudsonian Chickadee breeds in New Brunswick, has been questioned. There need not be the slightest doubt on this point, as I have seen four nests here; one in 1878, built in a stump; another in 1880, built in a telegraph post close by the railway station at Sutton; and two during last season. Of the latter, one was found near Edmunston by Mr. H. A. Purdie, and the second was found by Mr. J. W. Banks in the suburbs of St. John. These two were so similar, in position as well as construction, that a description of one will serve equally well for both. They were built in decayed stumps (apparently of firs or spruces) some three feet high and five inches in diameter. The entrance was from the top of the stump, and for the first six or eight inches was about two inches wide; then it widened gradually to three inches, which latter width was carried down another six inches to the bottom of the excavation. On the bottom a platform of hard-packed, dry moss had been placed, and upon this a second platform of felt, or felted hair, of a bluish-ash color (probably the inner fur of the common hare), and on this base rested the cup-shaped nest, which was also composed of this same felted fur. The walls of the nest were constructed with great neatness and precision, and were about two and one-half inches high and half an inch thick. In the nest found by Mr. Purdie the walls and lining were composed exclusively of fur, but in that found by Mr. Banks there was a considerable quantity of cow's hair interwoven, or rather felted, with the fur. I saw the nest at Edmunston on June 14, and the young in it were then but sparsely clothed with down and showing little signs of feathering; and when I examined the nest near St. John, on July 1, the five young which it contained were in much the same stage of development as those in the former nest had been.

In March last I witnessed a scene which convinced me that the saying "misery loves company" is as truly applicable to birds as to men. It was a keen, frosty morning in the third week of the month, a day as typical of midwinter as any that January brings us, for the snow still lay deep and firm upon the ground and

neither lakes nor streams had thawed; while the dry, thin air, though stirred by no wind, was so intensely cold that I was forced to walk very briskly and administer frequent rubs to nose and cheeks to keep at all comfortable. Passing along a suburban road about sunrise, my attention was attracted by the note of a Robin, which I soon discovered perched on a tree near by, wearing an appearance of utter wretchedness. His body was contracted as if by pain, his feathers were ruffled, and his head drooped. At long intervals he gave voice to a feeble, sad-toned note, and crouching thus, shivering with cold, hungry no doubt, and forlorn, appeared, physically and morally, but the ghostly shadow of that sprightly and vivacious Robin Redbreast that had filled the air with his blithesome carol in the happy spring-time. As I stood watching him I heard another note. Robin heard it also, and arousing a little called back. The new note was repeated and I recognized the voice as that of a Red-eyed Vireo, which I detected searching for a breakfast on the leafless branches of a distant birch. Robin's appearance was at once changed; his body and head were held erect, his feathers smoothed, and his voice rang out clear and strong. After a few more calls and a few strains of song both birds flew to a tree about mid-way between their first positions, and on approaching it to obtain a more certain identification of the Vireo, I found the pair sitting side by side on the same limb, their faces turned toward the newly-risen sun, singing away as merrily as if cold and hunger were unknown to them, or at least uncared for. They seemed indeed a joyous pair, yet there was something singularly pathetic in their very happiness. Possibly the Robin might contend successfully against the severity of our weather, as I have known many of his race to do before him. But the Greenlets ordinarily remain with us only during the warmest weather and this thoughtless fellow would, I feared, be unable to withstand the cold without a generous supply of insect food, which he would find it impossible to obtain.

After all, mused I, as I turned away, leaving the oddly assorted pair still singing, what better ending for such a life as a bird's could be desired! The cold-benumbed brain registers no pain, nor creates other than pleasing fancies. And how appropriate a death for so fairy-like a creature — to fall peacefully asleep upon the virgin snow, with the wind weaving over his stiffening form a shroud of glittering crystals.