

restricted, and only visible on parting the feathers; the plumage is also much brighter and fresher than in ten spring males with which it has been compared.

Back dark olive green, upper part of head and neck slate-gray, with a greenish tinge changing to olive-green on the sides of neck and ear-coverts. Forehead, lores and chin lemon-yellow, connected with similar color around eyes and extending along sides of throat to the shoulders. Yellow of forehead obscured by greenish, the lores by black. Throat and forepart of breast dull black. All black feathers tipped with pale greenish yellow, those on the throat being marked as follows. Bases dusky-black, centers pale yellowish, then a band of darker dusky-black tipped with yellowish. Wings and tail as in adults but fresher. Breast lemon-yellow extending down the center nearly to the under tail-coverts, which are yellow at the base, the longer feathers as well as the abdomen being white; sides of breast greenish. Shoulders yellow as in adults, the middle wing-coverts edged with yellowish with dark centers. Three outer tail-feathers with white blotches on inner webs, the fourth showing some white on the edge and the fifth but a trace. Bill black above and near tip of lower mandible, the rest horny; feet dark. As the specimen was moulting the feathers about the throat are scanty and the markings not well defined. The first three primaries are but half grown, they evidently being the last developed of the second flight feathers. When I first saw this specimen a single feather of the nestling plumage remained among the feathers of the head, and I have since found several others on the sides of the neck near the shoulders. They were very pale slate-gray, the one on the head having the margin well worn.—WILLIAM PALMER, *Washington, D. C.*

Irregular Abundance of Birds in the Breeding Season in Different Years at the Same Locality.—Several times of late my attention has been drawn quite forcibly to the fact that birds, or at least some species, are not entirely constant in their choice of a summer home, but vary the location of their breeding places to some extent from year to year. For this reason it does not seem safe to draw conclusions as to the abundance or rarity of a given species at a given place, from the experience of a single summer. As evidence of this, I may note the following discrepancies between my own observations and those of others. But for the fact that the terms 'abundant,' 'common,' 'quite common,' etc., are comparative and may not mean precisely the same to two persons, many more instances of this kind could, perhaps, be noted. In the following cases, however, it seems as if the only possible explanation was irregularity on the part of the birds themselves.

In the 'Atlantic Monthly' for August, 1894, Mr. Frank Bolles writes of the Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*) in Cape Breton, as "not as numerous as in New Hampshire, but there were enough of them to keep up a running fire of conversation from one end of the island to the other."

This was in the first two weeks of August, 1893. In Dr. Jonathan Dwight, Jr.'s, interesting paper on 'Summer Birds of the Bras d'Or Region of Cape Breton' (Auk, Vol. IV, p. 13) this species is included in the list, but nothing is said as to its abundance. Dr. Dwight's observations were made in the first half of August, 1886. Now my own experience was very different, for in the nine days from June 4 to 12, 1890, spent in Baddeck and vicinity, including excursions to St. Anne's Bay and Northeast Margaree, I found, as stated in 'The Auk' (Vol. VIII, p. 164), *not a single Red-eyed Vireo*.

Dr. Arthur P. Chadbourne spent the summer of 1887 in Waterville, N. H., and I was there during the last two weeks of June, this year. Dr. Chadbourne has kindly given me a copy of his field list, and on comparing it with mine, I find quite a number of differences. Perhaps the most remarkable are these. In 1887 Dr. Chadbourne found about half a dozen *Colaptes auratus* there. This year I found none, and so familiar and noisy a bird could hardly have escaped my notice, had it been present. On the other hand I found *Ammodramus sandwichensis savanna* tolerably common, *Clivicola riparia* (one sizable colony), and several *Turdus fuscescens*, which I heard singing whenever I walked down the road about sunset; but apparently none of these three species were present in 1887. Moreover, Dr. Chadbourne did not observe *Dendroica maculosa* there until after the middle of July, and those that he then found he took to be migrants, while seven years later I find them common birds in the Waterville Valley and, as it seemed to me, the commonest of the Warblers there. *Vireo olivaceus* was represented in 1887 by only a single pair while in 1894 they were actually *abundant*. The woods were full of them. Dr. Chadbourne found *Dendroica coronata* common on mountain summits, but did not see them on the slopes or in the valley until July 30, whereas I found them in the latter part of June quite common all through this region, though commonest at the higher elevations. *Zonotrichia albicollis* also was apparently present in much greater force this year than in 1887.

The causes of these irregularities are probably many and various, but the facts themselves struck me as interesting and perhaps too readily lost sight of in making generalizations.—FRANCIS H. ALLEN, *West Roxbury, Mass.*