

soaring in the air and singing like an English Skylark. I failed to identify him until he dropped down a little distance away and became the unmistakable, every-day performer of our fields.

In relating the circumstance to a gentleman whose knowledge of our home birds is only exceeded by his modesty, he told me that he once heard a Robin (*Merula migratoria*) imitating perfectly the cry of the Whip-poor-will. I could reconcile the statement with personal experience when only last month I listened to a Robin whose pipe had evidently been attuned to the wild cry of the Nightjar or perhaps to the strains of more than one bird of song, for it was very unlike his own clear, excellent music. The ways of birds are sometimes quite as unusual as their voices. It was but yesterday that I saw a Crow Blackbird hovering over a pond after the manner of a Kingfisher. He did everything but dive into the water and plainly enough was in search of something to eat.—G. S. MEAD, *Hingham, Mass.*

Strange Habits of the Rusty and Crow Blackbirds.—Since the unparalleled cold of the past winter throughout the Southern States, we have heard and read of many instances of the great destruction among our smaller birds; and the unusual scarcity of a number of our common spring migrants, both in the east and west, only demonstrates too clearly the larger numbers which must have perished in their winter home. The most remarkable instance of which I have learned, evidently brought about by the deep snows cutting off the food supply of some species, is the preying of the Rusty and Crow Blackbirds on other species for food.

I am very much indebted to my friend Mr. Jesse N. Cummings of Anahuac, Texas, for the following interesting letter on this subject. Anahuac is in Chambers Co., at the head of Trinity Bay, and north of Galveston. "March 24, 1895. In the first place snow exceeding the depth of two or three inches was never known before in this section of the country, until this storm which commenced the 14th of February and lasted for about thirty hours, covering the ground to a depth of twenty inches on a level and remaining at about that depth for three or four days before it commenced to thaw, and then it was three or four days more before the snow had entirely disappeared. I have on my place an artesian well which has a temperature of about 70° and a flow of 60,000 gallons per twenty-four hours. This kept a large piece of ground on the bay shore free from snow and was the only place in the country where a Jack Snipe (*Gallinago delicata*) could warm his toes or get anything to eat. I did not notice the first Snipe that came in, as it was the second day after the snow-storm that my attention was directed to them, and when I went down to see them I should say that there were at least two hundred birds on a space not over one hundred feet square. It did not take me long to get my gun and kill about forty in a short space of time, as you could hardly drive them away,

and as fast as they were flushed would shortly return. I could have shot them every day for a week had I cared to. At this small open piece of ground, the Rusty and Crow Blackbirds had collected, but I did not see them kill many Snipe the first day or two, but the third and fourth days they just went for them. I should say that I saw them actually kill ten or twelve Snipe on the ground where the snow had melted, but there were thirty or forty dead ones that I saw in other places. The Rusty Blackbirds were the principle aggressors, and it was astonishing to see how quickly they could attack and lay out a Snipe or Robin. Both species were killed while on the ground and the Blackbirds would only eat the head, or as near as I could see, the brain, while the body was left untouched.

“Up around my house they attacked the Robins and I have no idea how many they did kill, but you could see them lying around everywhere on the snow, and it was the same way all up and down the bay shore. I presume they killed other species of birds but I did not notice any. I cannot account for this sudden change in the Blackbirds’ habits except from lack of any other kind of food and they made the best of what was at hand.”

If any of the other readers of ‘The Auk’ have heard of any rapacious traits in the character of our Blackbirds, I hope they will give us the benefit of their experience.—RUTHVEN DEANE, *Chicago, Ill.*

Notes on the Breeding of the American Crossbill in Hamilton County, New York.—I have spent much of my time, during the last three summers, at Camp Killoquah, Forked Lake, Hamilton Co., New York, and have been much interested in watching the habits of some Crossbills that spend most of their time about the camp.

There are several camps on this preserve, which belong to the Hamilton Park Club, but Killoquah seems to be the only one that the Crossbills (*Loxia curvirostra minor*) consider thoroughly congenial, and here they replace most acceptably their distant connections, the English Sparrows.

In both 1892 and 1893 I had arrived at Camp too late even to pretend to hunt for their nests, but last year (1894) as soon as I had arrived there, in the last week in July, I immediately inquired for my friends, and was much disgusted to learn that they had built a nest, in under the roof of the tank that supplies the Camp with water, and that on June 5 this nest had been torn down, before any eggs had been laid, as it was clogging the automatic dial, which registers the amount of water in the tank, and as the birds were fouling the water.

Mr. W. Harrison Eisenbrey, the owner of the Camp, as well as the guides who knew the birds well, were present when the nest was torn down, and showed me exactly where it had been placed inside the roof, and on a shelf just above the indicator. The nest, too, was shown me, in a very dilapidated condition; but it was sufficiently well preserved to tell just how it must have looked.