

Since the 23d and 24th of March we have noted the Towhee on the following dates,— March 25, 28, April 2, 4, 7, 9 (singing), 10, 12, 13 and 16, when he disappeared.

The occurrence of this Towhee here makes a valid record of the wintering of this species in Massachusetts, and the female that was taken at Bedford, Mass., on January 2, 1896, and the specimen taken at Portland, Conn., would seem to show that this bird can stand the rigors of a New England winter, and that we may look for further records of the wintering of this species in the future.—REGINALD HEBER HOWE, JR., *Longwood, Mass.*

The Nonpariel at Longwood, Massachusetts.—On June 5, 1896, Henry V. Greenough brought me a male Painted Finch (*Passerina ciris*) which he had shot at about 8 A. M. The bird was in perfect plumage, its wings and tail showing apparently no cage wear and its feet in perfect condition.

I examined its stomach which contained white gravel, suggesting cage gravel (although the bird had been seen upon a gravel walk where I found the same kind of gravel), a white worm, a small amount of dark gravel and a few seeds (not canary seed), and the bird was also quite fat. Its testes were very much enlarged.

The bird uttered only a few notes on alighting and when started, like *chit-chit*. He was seen the day before, and although fairly tame at first, became quite wild from being watched.

The probability of course is strongly in favor of this being an escaped cage bird, but at the same time, the weather having been fair and warm for a week, this bird might have strayed from southern climes.—REGINALD HEBER HOWE, JR., *Longwood, Mass.*

Peculiar Traits of Some Scarlet Tanagers.—Scarlet Tanagers (*Piranga erythromelas*) are not common in this vicinity (Ridgewood, N. J.); for many years I saw only two or three during spring migrations. Within the last few years a few pairs have bred in this locality, generally on the outskirts of woods; so I was surprised to see a pair nesting in a Norway spruce, on a branch only about ten feet from the corner of my house, and about the same distance from the ground. In all my ornithological experience I never knew a pair of birds to live and nest so near my house with such secretiveness.

One of my family first saw the birds from an upper window that looked down on the nest. The nest building appeared to be all done by the female. The male bird was seen usually in the morning, apparently inspecting the work or noting its progress, but was seldom seen during the rest of the day. Both birds when approaching their nest alighted near the top of this high tree and descended through the branches to the nest, which was flat, very evenly built, like a cup of basket work, beautifully woven of material resembling the color of the bark of the

tree. Taken with the greenish color of the female, it was a remarkable instance of color illusion; every time I wanted to see the nest, knowing the branch it was on, I had to run my eye along the branch till it met the nest before I could see it; the shallow nest and the greenish female were remarkably inconspicuous. Only the female took part in the duties of incubation. She would remain on the nest even when one passed closely, but if anyone stopped to look at her, she would glide off the nest through the tree in the opposite direction, so quietly as to almost make one doubtful of her presence. The birds became quite accustomed to seeing one of my family sitting at the window close by. I did not go very near the nest for fear of disturbing the birds.

When the young were hatched another peculiarity was noticed, these birds differing much from most birds in the manner of feeding their young. I watched several evenings for an hour or more at a distance from the tree, but could clearly see the nest with my field glass. Still I did not once see the female feed her young. Most birds feed their young often just before sunset, and I think the female Tanager must have known she was watched, for one evening I watched as long as I could see the nest and no mother appeared. I thought some harm must have happened to her, but next morning she was at home. My business did not allow me to watch them much during the day; one afternoon the bright male Tanager put in an appearance in the upper part of the tree, but seeing me he made off without coming near the nest.

Soon the downy backs of the nestlings showed above the rim of the basket house, when the hen seldom brooded them unless it was wet weather. These youngsters were perfectly quiet, never clamoring for food, like so many other nestlings. Before they were big enough to project conspicuously above their flat nest they left it and went higher up the tree. This was on the 3d of July. Their color being greenish, it was very hard to distinguish them in the upper branches where they were secreted and fed by the parents.

A few days before leaving the nest a violent tempest passed over the vicinity; trees were thrown down and scattered over the ground in all directions; many nests of different birds were tossed or knocked out of the trees by wind or hailstones. I thought it impossible for my Tanagers to escape harm, but they were all right after the storm, which showed how the faithful mother must have covered them. The young birds and mother remained about for several weeks, but the male was absent, if his scarlet was still worn.

I took down the deserted nest. It was composed of long fine brown rootlets, fine thin stems of running blackberry, with a little grass and string evenly woven; it was thinly lined with a fine yellowish brown, thread-like fibre, as fine as horsehair. The whole structure can be seen through yet it is strong.

Had I expressed an opinion on the habits of the Scarlet Tanager from that year's observation I should have said the male bird was very shy,

giving as a reason that his conspicuous dress was a target for his enemies; which is the usual way we try to make other people think we know something. So I will now describe the following year's events, which was 1895. A female Scarlet Tanager came and built exactly on the same spot where the previous year's nest was; hence I infer it was the same female. But what of her gay lord, was he the same male? If so he must have undergone a great change of character, for he showed himself about the tree frequently and sang on the next tree very often during the day. But the most remarkable thing of all was, he spied a nest of Chippy Sparrows (*Spizella socialis*) with young ones. To my surprise he kept going to the nest and fed the baby Chippys, much to the disgust of their parents, who kept hovering around with food in their mouths which the little things could not take, after being fed so often by their gorgeous foster father. This was continued for a number of days. When his own precious young burst their shells and required attention he then left the Chippys to their rightful parents, which were now outgrowing their narrow domicile, being duly cared for. Mr. Tanager now paid as faithful attention to his own family, feeding them very frequently and singing his sweet song between feeding and collecting food. Seldom was he away, near sunset, longer than ten or fifteen minutes. So I am at a loss to account for the shyness shown the previous year, unless this was a second husband of the same female Tanager; and then the extraordinary fact of his feeding other birds' young ones is one of the exceptions that make the study of birds a pleasant recreation. — HENRY HALES, *Ridgewood, N. Y.*

The Occurrence in Nebraska of *Vireo flavoviridis*.—A specimen of the Yellow-green Vireo, *Vireo flavoviridis*, shot at Long Pine, Brown County, has just been received by the Curator of the Museum of the University of Nebraska. This is the first one reported in this State. It is a rare Vireo for the entire United States having been reported, as far as the author can learn, from Texas, California, and Canada only.

The specimen was shot and donated by the Rev. J. M. Bates of Long Pine, who has already done a great deal to further the knowledge of our native birds.

This adds one more to Prof. Lawrence Bruner's List of Nebraska Birds, recently published by the Nebraska State Horticultural Society. The total number of species and sub-species for the State is now 418.—ERWIN H. BARBOUR, *University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebr.*

***Helminthophila rubricapilla* vs. *Helminthophila ruficapilla*.**—The A. O. U. Committee appear to have ignored their rule "Once a synonym always a synonym," in the case of the Nashville Warbler. The West Indian *Dendroica ruficapilla* was called *Sylvia ruficapilla* by Latham in 1790 (Ind. Orn., II, 540). Wilson applied the same name to the Nashville Warbler in 1811 (Amer. Orn., III, 120). Whether by design or by