

spicuous bird. It is by no means shy, especially near its nest, where it will stand in the top of the nearest tree silently watching the intruder.

There were one or two pairs of these birds in nearly every rookery on the St. Johns, but in spite of our efforts, we succeeded in finding only two of their nests, both on April 21.

The first nest was on the outer edge of the rookery on a leaning willow and only four feet above the water. It measured 20 by 16 inches, was made of large sticks and lined with fine twigs; the five eggs in it were on the point of hatching, some of them already pipped, so we contented ourselves with photographing it while the bird was flying about anxiously. The second nest was within a few yards of a Ward's Heron's nest, these two being the only nests in the vicinity; it contained two eggs and two young birds, scantily covered with grayish down; it was placed 8 feet from the ground in a small willow, near the end of a long narrow island.

In Monroe County we saw a few Yellow-crowned Night Herons on the inland streams, both young and adult birds, but found no nests.

Although not much in demand for its plumes, it is so tame and unsuspecting that it should be protected, especially from the natives among whom both of the Night Herons are highly esteemed as food.



## THE RHYTHMICAL SONG OF THE WOOD PEWEE.

BY HENRY OLDYS.

THE usual phrases of the Wood Pewee are well known. The bird sings so persistently through the summer, when most birds are silent, that its melancholy rising and falling tones are familiar to all that frequent the woods during the milder season. But that these detached phrases are combined into a rhythmical song, uttered during the twilight hours of morning and evening, is a fact that seems generally to have escaped observation.

I first heard this interesting utterance in 1894, and not again,

although I was carefully listening for its repetition, until 1899, five years later. Every year since 1899 I have heard it with growing frequency, until now it is one of the ordinary bird songs of spring and summer.

The song is remarkable in that it is constructed in the form of the ballad of human music. I have elsewhere shown the significance of this fact,<sup>1</sup> and will not repeat the deductions to which it gives rise; but it may be well here to explain the identity of construction.

The arrangement of the ordinary ballad frequently consists of a musical theme for the first line, an answering theme for the second line that leaves the musical satisfaction suspended, a repetition of the first theme for the third line, and a repetition of the second theme, either exactly or in general character, but ending with the keynote, for the fourth line. An example will make this clear. Let us analyze the first four lines of 'Way Down upon the S'wanee River.'

Note the symmetrical repetition of phrases, giving a pleasing balance to the composition. Observe also that the note marked

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and common time (C). The first staff is divided into two parts: '1st theme.' and '2d, or answering theme.' The first theme consists of four notes: G4, A4, B4, C5. The second theme consists of four notes: G4, F4, E4, D4. A note 'a' is marked at the end of the second theme. The second staff is also divided into two parts: '1st theme repeated.' and '2d theme repeated (in character)'. The first theme is repeated as G4, A4, B4, C5. The second theme is repeated as G4, F4, E4, D4, with a note 'b' marked at the end, which is the keynote (D4).

*a* that ends the second line does not satisfy the musical sense, but leaves the listener in suspense, with the expectation of more to follow; but the note marked *b* at the end of the fourth line is the keynote, and is completely satisfying; there may be more to the song, as in the case of the example quoted, but it is not necessary that there should be. The effect is as though a semi-colon, a colon, a semicolon, and a period were placed at the ends of the respective lines.

<sup>1</sup> Harper's Magazine, August, 1902, pp. 477-478.

The Wood Pewee's continuous song is governed by the same principles. As I first heard it, it was rendered as follows :

1st theme.      Answering theme.      1st theme repeated.      2d theme repeated (in character).

The notes marked *a* and *b*, the closing notes of the second and fourth lines, have the same character as those in the corresponding positions in the human ballad given.

In the many times I have heard this song there have been numerous variations, such as

in which the third line and the passing note in the first line are omitted ;

in which an extra set of the first and second themes is given ;

in which the last line ends with the second of the scale, instead of with the tonic or keynote (metronome number not taken) ;

almost identical with the preceding example ;



a very melodious song, one of three that were heard simultaneously ;



in which the repetition of the first phrase is omitted — pitch a shade flatter than E; final note very lightly touched, the stress falling on the preceding F#; and



in which the tempo is somewhat more strenuous than in the preceding examples.

In addition to these and other variations that have come under my personal observation, there is a very peculiar one reported to me by Mr. Gerrit S. Miller, Jr. A Wood Pewee near his home in Alexandria County, Va., occasionally rendered the rhythmical song in a much higher key and in what Mr. Miller calls a falsetto voice — very light and high.

The song is usually sung over and over in strict time and without pause between verses. I have known it to continue for fifteen or twenty minutes at a time. It is usually preceded, and often followed, by the ordinary detached phrases. According to my experience it is never sung after dark, though the usual song may frequently be heard through the night, but seems to be confined almost entirely to dawn and dusk. It is not peculiar to any particular season during the Wood Pewee's stay with us, as I have noted it from shortly after the bird's arrival in spring to at least as late as September 7.

In closing this brief account I would call attention to the

remarkable fact — perhaps a joke on us — that a bird which we have classed outside the ranks of the singers proper should deliver a song that judged by our own musical standards takes higher technical rank than any other known example of bird music.

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## THE STATUS OF *MELOSPIZA LINCOLNI STRIATA* BREWSTER.

BY JOSEPH GRINNELL.

### *Melospiza lincolni striata* Brewster.

*Melospiza lincolni striata* BREWSTER, Auk VI, April 1889, 89 (original description, based on September birds from Comox, B. C.). — CHAPMAN, Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist. III, 1890, 148 (“standing doubtful”). — RHOADS, Auk X, Jan. 1893, 21 (characters not considered good). — RHOADS, Proc. Ac. Nat. Sci. Phil., 1893, 51 (characters considered “slight and variable”). — MCGREGOR, Condor, II, March 1900, 35 (skins from Redwood City, San Geronimo, St. Helena, and Battle Creek, California). — GRINNELL, Pac. Coast Avif. No. 3, June 1902, 57 (winter visitant in California “south through the coast belt to the San Francisco Bay region”). — BREWSTER, Bull. Mus. Comp. Zoöl., XLI, Sept. 1902, 150 (specimen from Victoria Mountains, L. Cal.; “I see no reason why the existence of intermediate specimens, such as those to which Mr. Chapman calls attention, should be necessarily prejudicial to the recognition of the form as a subspecies, although its standing cannot perhaps be regarded as assured until its breeding-grounds are definitely known, and fully mature birds in summer plumage have been examined.”).

*Melospiza lincolni* GRINNELL, Auk, XV, April 1898, 128 (found breeding at Sitka, Alaska, and a juvenile one-third grown secured; Mr. Brewster comments on an adult bird submitted to him as follows: “Your Lincoln’s Sparrow from Sitka, Alaska, agrees closely with my types of *M. c.* [sic] *striata* in respect to the streaking of the upper parts, but it is less olivaceous and the buffy is less rich and deep. Making due allowance for seasonal and individual variation, I should think it not improbable that it may represent the breeding plumage of *striata*, but it would be of course unsafe to assume this positively on the strength of a single specimen.” [Mr. Brewster’s wise but cautiously-made conjectures have proven correct]). — RIDGWAY, Bds. N. & Mid. Am. I, 1901, 382 (*striata* doubtfully synonymized under *Melospiza lincolni*).