

My only earlier record of an Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker in this state was of an adult male bird also, seen in Pine Banks Park, Malden-Melrose, on October 22, 1904,¹ and recorded there from time to time through the season up to April 21, 1905, thereby completing a six months' residence.

On my next trip over the Belmont lands on November 2 I did not find this Woodpecker.—HORACE W. WRIGHT, *Boston, Mass.*

The Song of the Blue Jay.—Possibly many who read the above title will think that they glimpse in it a lurking sarcasm, as they recall the notes which usually announce the presence of the "screaming jay," for comparatively few bird students or writers upon bird song seem to be aware of the Blue Jay's best musical performance.

Blue Jays are numerous in Florida and during my last two winters there I met a number of bird students in different localities who spoke to me of the Blue Jay song to which I refer, describing it as sweet, tender and quite lovely; delivered, they asserted, with a retiring modesty not perceptible in the Blue Jay's deportment on other occasions.

One friend, who is a keen observer of birds and their music, told me that when she spoke to him, some years ago, about this particular melody he said he had never heard any such song from the Blue Jay, but at a more recent period when meeting her again he referred to the song in question and said, "I have heard it since talking with you."

Though these reports occasionally came to me I did not hear the Blue Jay sing until last July in Winter Park, Florida. While a friend and I were seated near a window, dining, we heard a song unlike that of any of the common birds with which we were familiar; it was not loud nor ringing, nor at all like whistling, but the notes were formed into a sweet and somewhat complex bird melody. All paused to listen and it required from us only a lifting of the eyes to discover the singer, a Blue Jay, perching outside of the window on the lowest branch of a pine tree.

A search through books on birds and their notes yielded interesting quotations from the following authors:—in his 'Fieldbook of Wild Birds and their Music,' Mr. F. Schuyler Mathews says of the Blue Jay, "He attempts nothing that we can call a song." In the 'Color Key to North American Birds' by Dr. Frank M. Chapman and Chester A. Reed, turning to the description of the Blue Jay we read, "Notes: varied; commonly a loud harsh jay, jay; often whistling calls and imitations of the notes of other birds, particularly of common hawks." There is a similar estimate of the Blue Jay's musical powers in Chester A. Reed's "Bird Guide."

From Mabel Osgood Wright we have:—"A whistling bell-note in the breeding season; the usual cry a screaming jay, jay, jay." Nor do Bradford Torrey, Florence Merriam Bailey, Simeon Pease Cheney, and many others allude to a song from the Blue Jay.

¹ *Auk*, vol. XXII, Jan. 1905, p. 80.

However, in the 'History of North American Birds,' (Vol. II) by Baird, Brewer and Ridgway, we read: "The Blue Jay is conspicuous as a musician. He exhibits a variety in his notes and occasionally a beauty and a harmony in his song for which few give him credit." Although I am quite confident that Mr. John Burroughs does not mention this Blue Jay song in his earlier books, in 'The Ways of Nature' he quotes from Mr. Leander Keyser "the sweet gurgling roulade of the wild jays"; and Wilson alludes to the Blue Jay's occasional warbling with all the softness of tone of a bluebird. Mr. Nehrling also speaks of the Blue Jay melody in his 'Birds of Song and Beauty,' and Mrs. Olive Thorne Miller says in writing about a pet Blue Jay, "and occasionally uttering a sweet though not loud song." A bird student in central Georgia claims to have heard this Blue Jay music very often, quite early in the morning.

Do the Blue Jay's crude efforts at mimicry indicate a craving for more power in the realm of sound and melody, and is Nature evolving an original song for him through desire, or are we becoming aware that a bird singer has been modestly hiding his talent throughout the centuries behind a camouflage of swagger airs and teasing screams, or at best poorly executed mocking notes and a few whistles? — ISABEL GOODHUE, *Washington, D. C.*

The Aesthetic Sense in Birds as illustrated by the Crow.— The Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos brachyrhynchos*) is not generally recognized as a songster, but it has one note which has always seemed to me to serve for a love-song since it is heard chiefly in the spring and is delivered in a different fashion from the various caws in the bird's repertoire. This is the hoarse rattle which is familiar to all of us. It is uttered with the bill pointed vertically downward and opened rather wide. It is accompanied by no marked movement of the head and whole body as when the caws are delivered, but the note seems to issue of itself, as it were, being very suggestive of eructation. There is, however, an accompanying display of wings opened slightly at the bend and shoulder feathers ruffled such as is common in the courtship of birds. This love-song doubtless serves its purpose in the reproductive cycle, and it is conceivable that it may give pleasure to the singer's mate and to the singer himself, but on the other hand it would be hard to prove that it was anything more than a mere reflex, the mechanical performance of an automaton devoid of even the rudiments of aesthetic sense.

The Crow has another vocal accomplishment, however, of a radically different character and of a much higher order, one which, it seems to me, can be accounted for only by postulating a well-developed aesthetic sense. There is no melody in his vocal utterances and, of course, no harmony, but in time rhythm, he is a master. The only other bird that occurs to me as conspicuous for rhythm with or without melody is the Barred Owl, and his four-footed line of blank verse with the curious caesural pause in the middle is so unvarying that it may well be purely mechanical, whereas the Crow's is remarkable for its variety.