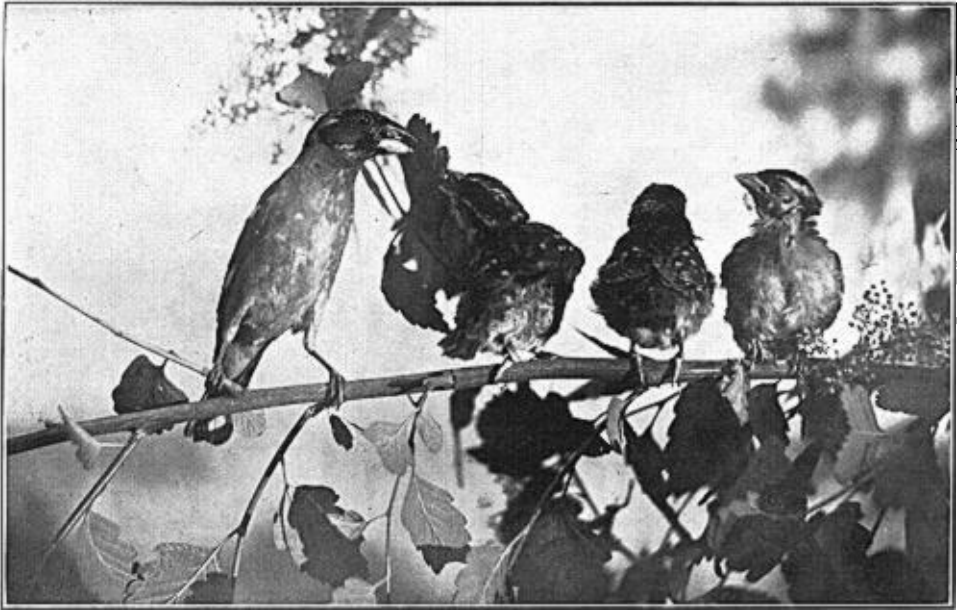


ever, the young grosbeaks were beyond the reach of the camera. Their wings had developed strength and they were beginning to hunt for themselves.

Portland, Oregon.



MALE GROSBK AND THREE YOUNG

Extracts from Some Montana Note-books, 1904

BY P. M. SILLOWAY

WILLOW Thicket, Spring Creek, Lewistown. Mont. May 7.—A most distressing event occurred today in our usually quiet little grove, an event that occurs annually about this time, though, and tonight I am mourning the loss of embryonic offspring. It was a magnificent setting, although it was the traditional unlucky number thirteen. I might have known, experienced old magpie that I am, it would turn out unlucky for me, and I should have stopped at the number twelve, as I did last year; but now it seems that my treasured thirteen is to rest on a cottony bed beside my lost twelve of last year. Today that same voracious egg-hog, genus *Homo*, called Silloway, came wandering through the thicket. I was sitting quietly in my earthen cot, meditating on the numerous cares awaiting me as the proud mother of thirteen infants, when a rude shock at base of the small hawk I had chosen for my home site caused me to flit from the nest. The *Homo* collector hurried up to my snug tenement, anchored himself among the many thorns which beset the surrounding branches, adjusted a cigar box in front of him, and began to remove one by one my precious clutch. There is no thorn without its rose, however, and even in my distress it was amusing to watch him try to pack thirteen eggs with cotton intended for only nine eggs, in a space intended for only nine eggs. He stretched every bit of cotton to its utmost capacity, poked unwrapped eggs into cavities between wrapped eggs, and finally worked his way down in an apparent condition of hilarious bewilderment. Here-

after I shall not try to exceed the bounds of magpie propriety by laying more than the five to nine allowed me by the books.

Morrison Ranch, Lewistown, Mont., May 25.—Strange that I cannot overcome being so startled at the report of a little gun! It would seem that a matronly Bartramian sandpiper of several seasons' experience should be accustomed to such a noise, but to this hour I am unable to control myself under such circumstances, and at last it has been my undoing. I was sitting snugly in my nest in a clump of grass which I found ample for my accommodation, apparently safe against the prying eyes of any Homo collector. Safe, I say, because that nightmare of sitting birds in this locality, Silloway, had been prowling around my nest several times, on chase of long-billed curlews I believe, and though he had passed within twenty feet of me, he had not spied out my crouching form in the herbage. At length, though, when I knew he was at a safe distance from my home, he fired a little gun at a longspur that was hovering near my nest. At the report I fluttered from the grass tuft, alighted some sixty feet away, and immediately realizing the magnitude of my mistake, attempted to elude him by "teetering" and waving my wings up and down. He did not give the least heed to my demonstrations, however, but went straightway to my turf, peered into the open top, and saw my four pointed treasures in their grassy bed. "A great find," he exclaimed. "Who would have thought that I should find my first set of Bartramian sandpiper in far away Montana, when I have searched hours and hours for it in old Illinois." Well, if it gave him so much pleasure to find the nest, he is welcome to the eggs. I can hunt another grass tuft, lay another set, and rear my brood in peace while he goes "hiking" after eggs at Flathead.

Borgh Grove, Lewistown, Mont., June 7.—My voice is always the cause of my undoing. It is well known that a red-naped sapsucker is not gifted with musical ability worth mentioning, but I am sure that my voice is pleasing enough to me and to my better half, and hence I am prone to exercise it much when the joys of domestic bliss impel me. When I flew screaming from our cozy cavity in our stout cottonwood this afternoon, I little dreamed that that bane of nesting birds in this region, Silloway, was looking around in the grove. He immediately appeared on the scene, and with no delay he located the entrance to the cavity. It had been made low, only twelve feet from the ground, and though I understand he is no climber, he shinned up to the place. I do not think he had come out for sapsucker eggs, though, for he seemed quite puzzled how to proceed in examining our newly-made establishment. It was in a live tree, you understand, for we sapsuckers prefer such for our nesting sites, the books say. He tried to work his way into the cavity, hacked at the entrance with his pocket knife, and at length appeared to give it up, for he slid down the trunk and went away. I hastened back to the nest and settled upon the six white eggs. Soon a rude shock aroused me, and upon flying out, screaming lustily as usual, I found the egg-hog armed with a big axe he had borrowed at a nearby house. There is no trying to evade an egg-crank, anyway, and though scolding angrily while he chopped open the cavity, I was powerless to prevent the despoiling of the nest. One after another the six handsome rosy-fresh eggs were rolled in cotton, placed carefully in a baking-powder box, and thus disappeared from my sight. "My first set of red-naped sapsucker," he murmured, "and six eggs too, regular beauties." I am glad they were quite fresh, for I had not become so "sot" on them as I should if it had been a week or two later. Even this evening I noticed a nice site for a new nest, and with only two or three days' trouble we can have as cozy a cavity as before. It doesn't pay to cry over lost eggs.

Crowley Pasture, Lewistown, Mont., June 14.—I have always chided Bob for singing so persistently near our nest, and now he has brought ruin upon us by his merry jingles. Like Adam of old, though, he insists that I alone am to blame. Bob always was an ardent suitor, however, and now that our home has been despoiled, he has an opportunity to retune his voice and enjoy another period of bobolink honeymoon, while I am establishing a new home in another part of the pasture. There was a certain fence post whereon Bob was accustomed to sing whenever I was in my nest, and it seems that one Silloway, a regular crank robber of birds' nests, became suspicious regarding the frequent singing of Bob at that particular place. At any rate, the collector kept watching that little corner of swampy meadow, and frequently searched through it for a nest of bobolink. Today he entered the little corner when I was on my nest, and all the while Bob sat on that fence post and sang like the silly lover that he is, until from sheer ecstasy I fluttered from the tuft. The books say, I am told, that I always leave my nest by stealth and rise many feet away from it; but it is a failing of the books to interpret individual actions as general habits. Bobolinks do act thus on occasions, probably when suspecting danger at hand, but really I did not know that the arch-enemy was near, and somehow I fluttered right out of the tuft. He went straight to the spot, and looking down among the open grass blades, saw my three eggs with two that Mrs. Cowbird had intruded upon me. "Thanks, Mrs. Bobolink," he cried, "thanks for small favors I had rather my first set of bobolink had been larger. Why did you stop with three eggs, anyway, when the books credit you with five to seven?" And come to think of it, why did I stop with three? I suppose that in making room for Mrs. Cowbird's imposition, I found our snug cot comfortably filled and so contented myself with the smaller number. If he looks over the other portion of the meadow, he will find several nests of seven, without cowbird's, and I will stake my reputation that he will find them before many hours. (This prediction of Mrs. Bobolink was verified before many days. P. M. S.)

Crowley Swamp, Lewistown, Mont., June 17.—Why on earth does a grown-up man want to grope around in a cat-tail swamp, wading to his middle in mud and water, and frightening us poor soras half to death? Why does he? I used to wonder at it, but tonight I can answer the question from bitter experience. He wants our eggs, of course. Now I have nested in this little pond for the past four years, and have seen that egg-crank Silloway wander around here each season, but some way or another he never seemed to think of entering my chosen domain. Today, however, when he went past he eyed the rushes as if he intended to invade them, but passed on as usual, and I settled myself to a forenoon of enjoyment in my snug basket of rushes. At length I heard a crashing and splashing which came nearer and nearer, and before I was aware of it the nest robber was brushing against my grass tuft. Of course I flew out with a scream of fright, and in a moment he was gloating over my fourteen eggs arranged so nicely in two layers. "Another good find, and a good record made," uttered the collector, "for the sora nests not only in Montana but in Fergus county and within sight of Lewistown." Thus I lost my eggs. I'll warrant me that he had a hard time preparing those eggs for his cabinet, for the last one had been laid some days, and I even expected some of them to begin to hatch tomorrow. Well, if he enjoys it, let him take them. I'll lay another lot. It will only take me two weeks. (The eggs were found to be a trifle incubated, as Mrs. Sora leads us to infer, but they made a nice set at any rate. P. M. S.)

Lewistown, Montana.