

necessary in considering this subject, to bear in mind the great percentage of losses of individuals every year, and the consequent need of new mates. The male's long period of waiting, in this case eight days, before acquiring a new consort, indicates that the new union was not hastily entered upon. This pair of Catbirds, 46319 and 117437, raised two broods in 1924, and built their nests, not in the syringas, but in a clump of young evergreens on another side of the house. In the spring of 1925, Catbird 46319 (♂) returned to the station on May 11th. Immediately he began to busy himself, now an experienced "family man", with the beginnings of a nest in the syringa thicket where his nest had been in 1923 (and probably in 1922). When, however, his mate appeared, on May 14th, the nest-foundation in the syringas was abandoned, and a nest was at once begun in the young evergreens chosen by them (or by her?) in 1924. The female, when taken, proved to be No. 117437, the same mate as in 1924, and this pair is continuing together down to the present writing. The female of this pair has returned to our station once, and the male has returned twice. We find it convenient, in keeping station-records and in speaking of our returned birds, to designate the number of times a bird has returned by an exponent figure: thus, Catbird 46319 is a return<sup>2</sup>. Should he return another season, he will become a return<sup>3</sup>; and so on. — HELEN GRANGER WHITTLE, Peterboro, N. H., July 1st, 1925.

---

**A Problem in Ecology.** — Many birds, for reasons apart from climate, latitude, and ascertainable peculiarities of habitat, have an irregular distribution both as to time and place. This is true both as to breeding-homes and migration-resorts. Swamp Sparrows, for instance, habitually frequent certain swamps, while they stubbornly avoid others near by, apparently similar, which look just as inviting to the human eye. A county map showing the location of the various swamps furnishing breeding-homes to these birds, or resorted to by migrants, would show — what? Every bird-lover much afiel at nesting-time knows that while this species nests throughout our territory, it is only infrequently seen. Those who are unacquainted with its common, simple song will pass it by, and doubtless this is one reason that its occurrence is not more frequently reported. During migration the case is different. Then the species is apparently silent and is seldom seen. Another reason it is not more frequently reported is the difficulty of identifying it in all its different plumages. Little is known about the details of its migration-routes. Are its lines of migration due north and south by way of swamps fortuitously located, or are they determined by landmarks?

I desire information concerning the Swamp Sparrow's abundance, migration, and habits from all over New England, especially from towns east of the Connecticut River and approximately north and south of Belchertown. I am particularly desirous of obtaining information from our various members as to the number and ecological character of the frequented swamps in their vicinity, and whether visited merely in migration or for nesting-purposes. Thank you. — EDWARD GOULD ROWLAND, M. D., Belchertown Massachusetts State School.

---

**Notes on Tree Sparrows** (*Spizella m. monticola*). — From the first of January until spring Tree Sparrows came nearly every day to my traps. As little is known about where birds spend the night, I became interested in watching this particular flock in the hope that something might be

learned. My observations began early in February, and four or five afternoons a week I stationed myself at 4.00 P. M. where I could watch the trap area and the trees and shrubbery surrounding it. The first late afternoon about thirty individuals gathered in a plum tree some fifty feet from the traps. They were perhaps five minutes in gathering, during which time excited chips were uttered by many of the birds. From there they drifted into a maple that overshadowed the plum tree, and within two or three minutes, in which the call-notes became more frequent, an individual suddenly launched itself into the air to be followed by six or seven others. These in turn were followed several seconds afterward by another group of about the same number, and a third group perhaps twice the number of the two former followed after a similar interval. Their flight seemed directed toward a small pine-clad area, several acres in extent, a third of a mile away. Circumstances prevented my visiting this area more than three times, but each time call-notes were heard, and the last time I was able to follow a flock as it left the feeding station. A little search soon located it feeding on weed seeds that had fallen on a small place bare of snow. They soon flew in a body to a detached group of pines under a ledge that sheltered them from the north winds. The flock eventually gathered in one tree, moving about from limb to limb, preening feathers and cleaning bills. With the coming of twilight, these operations soon ceased and they would probably have spent the night there, but in my anxiety not to miss anything, I approached too close, whereupon the flock took alarm, flying to another tree near by, when darkness prevented further observation. I found from numerous observations that the birds left the feeding-grounds in groups of six or eight individuals. This continued until February 26th, when they began leaving in pairs, although the latter sometimes left in loose flock-like formation. Each flock seemed to follow a certain course to the roost, some being direct and others quite roundabout, the latter following trees. Not all the Sparrows coming to my station used the roost I have described, some apparently going to another stand of small pines, half a mile away, and lying in the opposite direction. Those flocks, using the first mentioned roosting-place, assembled in three different trees for departure, while those going in the opposite direction used an equal number but different trees. I wondered if each flock might not have a special tree, but as the number of birds varied so from day to day, I had no means of ascertaining this. The arrival of spring ended all opportunity for further observation, much to my regret. — WENDELL P. SMITH, Wells River, Vermont, June 8, 1925.

---

**Note on the Cowbird (*Molothrus ater ater*).** — The following note may chronicle a little more interesting information regarding this species: On the 29th of April, 1924, I noted a male and female Cowbird moving about in the grass or weeds in our garden and close to my pull-string trap. Both birds were certainly adults. The male bird took the lead, and the female ran after him with quivering wings, begging to be fed, and finally he acquiesced and was seen to feed her several times. After this both entered the trap, but in my haste I was only able to capture one of them, the female, who now wears band No. 46866. It is a common sight at this season of the year to see male birds in general feeding their mates. Mr. Whittle tells me he has seen our common Chickadee often do so, as well as the White-breasted Nuthatch, so this eminently avian instinct on the part of this Cowbird has not been lost, although the kindred instincts, such as