

AN EARLY MORNING RAMBLE IN AUTUMN IN THE WILL-BE POTOMAC PARK.

To the lover of birds, no place about the metropolis is more attractive than the low reclaimed area which, according to the wish of Congress, is soon to furnish Washington with a most beautiful as well as extensive park. Here the tide of avian migration surges back and forth twice each year, and thousands upon thousands of birds make it their home, some for a short, others for a longer period, and many, no doubt, are residents for life.

If one views this area from the Washington Monument it appears as an extensive meadow, girt on all sides by sea walls, washed by the Potomac River, and crossed by the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad near the upper end. But how different does this area appear when one seeks a closer acquaintance with the premises.

A tangle impenetrable presents itself on all sides. It would be impossible to move at all were it not for the fact that industrious anglers have beaten a path near the edge under the row of skirting poplars and weeping willows, in order to approach the favorite haunts of the finney prey. Rag-weed, poke-weed, golden-rod and asters attain a maximum development in this alluvial soil, and these are frequently matted by interlacing smart-weed and morning-glories.

In order to observe the birds under the best advantages, it becomes necessary to cut a path toward the center of the island where a row of trees mark an elevated ridge. The lower portion of the field is covered by a dense growth of low willows, and wherever there is room, tall, stout stems of poke-weed, draped with numerous bunches of purple berries, extend their branches through the tops of the willows. Thus we have thicket and tangle every where, be it rag-weed, willow or golden-rod, and our trusty, rusty machete is called into requisition, as well as the oldest suit in our possession, and thus armed we set out. It is hard work, and for once it seems as though we believed in "work before pleasure." Tired, we return, scarcely a bird noticed except the ever present Song Sparrow and a curious Maryland Yellow-throat. We renew our efforts the second day and reach the ridge which extends down through the center, and now it is comparatively easy to proceed as here an old path seems to have been too well packed to permit of much vegetable growth. We are happy, and anticipate many pleasant hours. So much for preliminaries.

This morning, October 7, 1897, found me on my usual pre-breakfast ramble to the flats. I reached them by fifteen minutes to six, just as day was making an earnest effort to dispel the lingering shades of night. All is wrapped in mist and fog. As I stand on the elevated rail-road track and gaze over the flats, they appear more like a sheet of water: in fact it would be impossible to tell where land and water merge were it not for the tops of the fringing poplars.

Taking up my trail, I force my way cautiously out toward the center. Every twig and leaf is moist with dew, and so am I before I have advanced many rods. The Song and Swamp Sparrows are moving up into the tips of weeds to catch the first gleam of Old Sol as he pushes his rays through the thick mist causing the tops to appear as if studded with sparkling gems. A "squeak" brings a host of them from all sides, and I observe that *Zonotrichia albicollis* has appeared during the night. All seem eager to know what is up, and a second "squeak" brings them all about me, some so close that I could take them with my hand if they would permit, without moving. They now give vent to their anger and denounce the intruder with scornful angry notes, moving about appearing like little furies.

I leave them, and in another place where tall rag-weed forms a thicket of twenty or more feet in width and several hundred in length, bounded on both sides by a maze of golden-rod, asters and poke-weed, I crouch low, for here the lower leaves have long since fallen, no doubt due to the absence of sun-light which is shut out by the green canopy above. This growth reminds one of a miniature pine forest. Here I again "squeak" and a Maryland Yellow-throat replies. Soon a whole family of these ever curious fellows is inspecting me from all sides. A little more "squeaking" brings up a Golden-crowned Thrush, all in a rage, strutting about with raised crest, drooped wings, cocked tail and ruffled feathers, subjecting me, the source of all trouble, to close inspection, adding a few angry remarks. But I am looking for another bird, the Connecticut Warbler, and a little more "squeaking" lures him from his tangle. In his movements he resembles the Yellow-throat to some extent, but he is a little more deliberate. While not shy, he nevertheless moves cautiously from reed to reed and darts back into the maze when danger threatens. Very rarely does he leave this retreat for a more elevated position, and I have only once observed him to fly into a tree, when he was suddenly surprised while walking in my path. He is quite silent at this season, due no doubt, to the extreme abundance of adipose tissue. Before I leave this place an aggressive House Wren has joined the ranks of my denunciators.

The sun is now fairly up and threatens short existence to the fog. As I approach a bunch of sumac I notice a host of warblers in their tops, and for the first time see the Black-poll and the Yellow-rump Warblers perform their ablutions. The pearly dew is still dropping from the leaves, and this is a sparkling fountain for these birds. They will settle on a petiole and move toward the tip of the leaf, rapidly beating their wings down upon this, causing the dew to fly over them in a fine spray. I watched them for some time. Wondering how effective such a bath might be, I leveled my gun upon one and dropped him. He was wet—not only on the under parts but all over; thus this bathing method proved to be quite an effective one.

Looking down, my eyes fell upon a little rabbit, far from half grown, all bunched up and shivering in the chill moist air, patiently longing for Old Sol's rays to assume a more vertical slant and warm little bunny's jacket. A little "squeaking" brings ap some of our earlier acquaintances, a few angry mewing Catbirds and a Water Thrush.

No other species except a few Goldfinches feeding on the seeds of Ambrosia, are noted until we reach the poplars. Here a crow moves off with alarm and a Flicker keeps his distance. A Cooper's Hawk swoops down among the birds but moves off empty footed, and a flock of noisy Red-wings passes by. A dead member of the row, gives a resting place to a bunch of Wax-wings, who are playing catch with the drowsy insects which are taking their morning flight.

As I pass by the maples on my return trip I notice a Robin in the tip-top of one of the trees sending up his morning prayers. His breast has faded from the red of spring-tide to a more humble hue; but his voice is just as cheery as it was then. I stride on, knowing that breakfast is waiting, and note as the last accession a Black-throated Green Warbler flitting ahead of me as I hasten on to regale the inner man.

One naturally wonders how many of these thousand birds will visit this gem of bird retreats when artful man will have changed the tangle to a park, when lawn supplants the weeds and avenues my path.

PAUL BARTSCH, *Washington, D. C.*

October 9, 1897.

NOTES ON SOME OF THE RARER BIRDS OF CHESTER COUNTY, PENNA.

GREAT BLUE HERON, *Ardea herodias*.—A solitary individual frequented