

## BACHMAN'S SPARROW, IN DeKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA.

---

On the morning of June 1st, 1899, while tramping over an old field, a short distance from my home, my attention was attracted by the song of a bird, the peculiar notes of which I had never heard before.

It was some little time before I succeed in locating him, as he possessed a way of his own, of evading every effort on my part to find him.

He seemed to be here, there and everywhere, all at the same time, for when I advanced toward the direction of his voice, his song would cease, then in a few moments it would be heard again in some other part of the field.

He did not at any time appear to be far away, but like some invisible airy nothing, he stole around, and about me, without my obtaining the slightest glimpse of him.

Finally I secreted myself beneath the branches of a low persimmon tree, with the avowed determination of remaining with my new found friend for the day. After a short time of eager waiting I saw a bird fly from a clump of blackberry bushes and light on the dead limb of a pine sapling but a few yards away. As soon as he touched the tree he assumed a crouching position, much in the manner of a bird attempting to screen himself from view, but in a trice he stood erect, and then that little bit of a wee mite of a bird begun his wonderful song, which eclipsed anything in the shape of bird music I had ever heard.

Without an effort he stood upon that old dead branch and warbled the song he had learned so well. No turn of head, no jerk of his tail, no spread of his wings, or movement of his feathers, save a slight swelling of his throat, as he poured forth his sweet refrain immindful of the world around him. The song continue for one or two minutes, when there would be a kind of intermission of one or two mintues more, during which time the bird would busy himself arranging his plumage preparatory to another performance, which made me want to clap my hands by way of encore, but fearing he would not respond, I dared not to do it.

Tone of the notes were similar to those of the Indigo,

Bunting, but more continued, louder and stronger, while the wind up of this indescribable melody, was not unlike the metallic clink of the well-known Bobolink.

In some parts of his song the bird became a veritable ventriloquist. At times I caught myself turning my head to better hear the notes of the same bird, which appeared to come from a songster in another direction.

A slight but intentional movement on my part startled the bird, causing him to fly to another pine tree some thirty yards away; so to avoid a misfortune, I "brought him down," and soon held him in my hand.

The specimen was sent to Mr. F. L. Burns, of Berwyn, Pennsylvania, who without being positive, pronounced my find a Bachman's Sparrow. It was afterwards sent to the Smithsonian Institution, where Dr. Richmond verified Mr. Burn's identification.

The spot where the bird was captured is an old turned out field, so common in our Southern Country, and is well adapted to the wants of the Bachman's Sparrow. For years this field has remained uncultivated, and has a waste of broom sedge, a kind of coarse grass which grows wild on barren and neglected places. For the purpose of pasturage this field has been "burned off" every Spring. This, with the constant grazing of cattle has caused a short stiff stubble to form upon it. Here and there over the entire field grow blackberry briers, and thorn bushes, while the whole is overgrown with low stunted growth of persimmon, oak, pine and sumach. The field includes an area of about twenty acres, with a common country road running through it, dividing it into two nearly equal divisions. This road is used constantly by teams going to and from Atlanta, and the tree from which the bird was shot, stands not more than a dozen yards from the center of this thoroughfare. I mention this road as argument to show, that while the Bachman's Sparrow, though a shy and timid bird, never courting the presence of man, does not turn from his chosen haunts to shun him.

On the 20th of June of the same year, while walking over the same field again, I secured one male, one female and two young but fully fledged birds, the sex of which I was unable

to determine. I afterward found an empty nest about fifty yards from where the birds were taken.

On April 28th, 1900, I secured another male in the same field, about two hundred yards from where the other specimens were found. This was a smooth, clean bird and probably had not yet found a mate. Thus ends my experience with the Bachman's Sparrow.

Some other time, I trust I may be able to write of this bird, that it is "fairly common" in DeKalb County, Georgia.

ROBT. WINDSOR SMITH, *Kirkwood, Georgia.*

---

## CROW LANGUAGE.

---

While watching *Corvus americanus* at all seasons of the year and listening to their various cries, I have frequently been impressed by the individuality shown in their most common notes, no two birds appearing to have voices exactly alike, whether found in pairs, small companies or great flocks. Perhaps they are few collecting oologists who have not noticed the dissimilarity in the notes of the sexes about the nest. While not doubting but that they possess a simple language of their own, the difficulties of interpretation are greatly increased by the wide variation occasioned by this same individuality. In saying that the Crow probably possesses a language, it need not be inferred that it is meant to assume that it has acquired conversational powers, but merely through the articulation of a few sounds it is able to convey to its own species its sense of pleasure, fear, anger, etc., in other words a vocal code of signals familiar to its associates.

In my mind there is no question but that the manner of utterance is of higher value than mere difference in note. A note possesses various meanings according to the pitch and manner of uttering it. It would be difficult if not utterly impossible to discover and record the language or dialect of a savage tribe of our fellow human beings merely by a stolen and occasional hearing of scraps of conversations, then how much harder it would be