

GENERAL NOTES

RECORDING BIRD SONGS.

The present method of recording bird songs is artificial and unsatisfactory, and I am hoping to stir up interest in this subject, so that by discussion we may arrive at some standard method of describing bird songs and bird calls.

Distinction must be made between the voice of a bird and his song, and there is a difference between musical, i.e. melodious notes and unmusical, i.e. piercing notes. Every time a bird makes a sound, he does not necessarily sing.

I think we are safe in saying that birds have (1) ordinary song or songs, which they give during the entire season, and (2) a mating song of more elaborate character, which they give during a limited period. They also have (3) a series of musical call notes, (4) signal notes, and often (5) alarm notes.

In discussing the songs of birds, we must bear in mind that such songs have quality,—pitch,—rhythm,—melody,—and time, and in noting such songs it will be necessary for us to use the ordinary musical scale to which orchestral instruments are tuned in preference to the tempered scale of the piano.

In suggesting the *quality* of the tone, I would make four divisions: (1) like a banjo, i.e. gut strings; a zither, i.e. wire strings; (2) a flute, i.e. head tones; a bassoon, i.e. throat tones.

In describing the *pitch*, it may be well to assume that birds sing in the second, third and fourth and fifth octaves above middle C.

In describing the scale, it might be well to use the four strings of the violin rather than the piano notation.

Each species of birds has a *rhythm* of its own, which is marked and decided, (but erratic within limitations) and substantially the same in each male of the species, although not identical.

In describing the *time*, we may say that it is erratic and variable and difficult to accurately classify, but using metronome markings, as a basis, the speed should be increased from four to ten times.

In describing melodies, we may say that they are never sustained, but are usually in short theme-like phrases, with an ornamentation of trills, or low pendant phrases interspersed between the themes. Phrasing in each species is, in general, alike, but varied by each individual. I have heard Song Sparrows from the same family sing six different variants of the same general song.

As an example, I venture to suggest the following method of description varied as occasion requires to meet the facts:

Rhythm—Four long notes, two short high notes, a trill, two drop notes.

Quality—Zitherlike in the fourth octave.

Pitch—4/4. Metronome markings, 64 plus 10.

Melody—Four notes followed by a jumble of ornamentations similar to colortura work, given in a low tone; two drop notes sung with throat tone.

Variants of the song: Probably three, at least three distinct themes of four notes each can be noted.

I submit these suggestions, hoping that they will bring out some discussion on this subject from ornithologists who have made a study of bird songs and their notation.

P. B. COFFIN.

Chicago, Ill.

AN INTERESTING HYBRID OF MARECA PENELOPE (WIDGON) AND MARECA AMERICANA (BALDPATE).

A male hybrid of the above species taken in North Bay, Princess Anne County, Virginia, on November 28th, 1918, and sent me by Mr. E. V. Roe, is worthy of a detailed description.

Crown, almost pure white, more so than with *americana*. Superciliary line, partly green, partly red.

Lore, ear coverts, throat, and side of neck mottled similar to *americana*, only with undergrown reddish like *penelope*.

The green on the wing, speculum, is less than with *penelope*, but more than with *americana*. Balance of wing similar to *penelope*.

Back similar to *penelope*, but with undergrown of faint reddish tinge.

In the under tail coverts is a single white feather with a black spot about three-eighths-inch diameter, near its extremity.

Although the bird had been under the tender care of the postal authorities for five days previous to arrival,—when it should have come through in one,—I managed to make a very creditable addition to my series of American taken *Mareca penelope*.

HAROLD H. BAILEY.

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MIMUS POLYGLOTTOS POLYGLOTTOS IN NORTH CENTRAL NEW JERSEY.

The published records of *Mimus polyglottos polyglottos* for New Jersey since 1880 are perhaps not numerous enough to render unacceptable still another. The writer has in his collection,