

VARIOUS

BIRDS AND ALL NATURE,
VOL. V, NO. 5, MAY 1899

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Various Birds and all Nature, Vol. V, No. 5, May 1899 Illustrated by Color Photography

THE CEDAR WAXWING

(*Ampelis cedrorum*.)

LYNDS JONES

THERE is no more beautiful bird in our northern states, if there be in the whole country, than our waxwing. Many birds are more gorgeously appareled, and with many there are more striking contrasts exhibited, but nowhere do we encounter a texture more delicate covering a bearing more courtly. One despairs of adequately describing the silky softness of the plumage and the beautiful shades of color. But the perfecting of color photography has made that task unnecessary. We may wonder why some crested birds have this regal insignia bestowed upon them by nature, but it would be impossible to think of the waxwing without his crowning glory. Not less characteristic are the horny appendages resembling red sealing wax attached to the secondary wing feathers and sometimes also to the tail feathers. They seem to be outgrowths of the tip of the shaft. These, with the yellow-tipped tail, form the only bright colors in the plumage.

The cedar waxwings are gregarious, except during the breeding-season, wandering about the country in flocks of a dozen individuals, more or less, stopping for any considerable time only where food is plentiful. Their wandering propensities make their presence a very uncertain quantity at any season of the year. During the whole of 1898 they were present in considerable numbers at Oberlin, Ohio, nesting in orchards and shade trees plentifully, but thus far in 1899 very few have been seen. No doubt their presence is not suspected even when they may be numerous, because they do not herald their appearance with a loud voice nor with whistling wing. Their voice accords perfectly with their attire, their manners are quiet and unassuming, and their flight is well-nigh noiseless. One moment the flock is vaulting through the air in short bounds, the next its members are perched in a treetop with erected crests at attention. If all is quiet without cause for suspicion, the flock begins feeding upon the insect pests, if they are in season; upon the fruit, if that is in season. So compact is the flock, both in flight and while resting, that nearly every member might be taken at a single shot. The birds are so unsuspecting that they can easily be approached, thus presenting a tempting prize to the small hunter who may design the beautiful plumage for some hat decoration.

In common with the goldfinch, the waxwings are late breeders, making their nests in June, July, and August. They seem to prefer rather small trees and low ones, nesting in orchard trees and in ornamental shrubbery as well as in shade trees. The nest is not usually an elaborate affair, but rather loosely made of twigs, grass, rootlets, and leaves, often lined with grape-vine bark, thus hinting that the species has sprung from an original tropical stock, which necessarily makes its nest as cool and airy as practicable. The eggs are unique among the smaller ones, in their steely bluish-gray ground, rather evenly overlaid with dots and scratches of dark brown or black, thus presenting an aggressiveness out of all harmony with the birds. But the peculiar colors and pattern aid greatly in rendering the eggs inconspicuous in the nest, as anyone may prove by noticing them as they lie on their bed of rootlets

or leaves. They are usually four in number in this locality, but may vary somewhat according to the season and individual characteristics.

The food of the waxwing is varied both according to season and other conditions. Wild fruit, berries, and seeds form much of their food during the fall and winter months. Mr. A. W. Butler states that, "in winter nothing attracts them so much as the hack-berry (*Celtis occidentalis*). Some years, early in spring, they are found living upon red buds." The investigations of the food of this species by Professor F. E. L. Beal prove that the greater share of it consists of wild fruit or seeds with a very small allowance of cultivated fruits. Animal matter forms a relatively small proportion of the food, but this small proportion by no means indicates the insect-feeding habits of the birds. It might well be suspected that so varied a diet would enable the birds to accommodate themselves to almost any conditions, largely feeding upon the food which happens to be the most abundant at the time. Thus, an outbreak of any insect pest calls the waxwings in large flocks which destroy great numbers to the almost entire exclusion of fruit as a diet for the time. It cannot be denied that the waxwings do sometimes destroy not a little early fruit, calling down upon them righteous indignation; but at other times they more than make amends for the mischief done.

Of the voice Mr. A. W. Butler says, "They have a peculiar lisping note, uttered in a monotone varying in pitch. As they sit among the branches of an early Richmond cherry tree in early June, the note seems to be inhaled, and reminds me of a small boy who, when eating juicy fruit, makes a noise by inhalation in endeavoring to prevent the loss of the juice and then exclaims, 'How good!' As the birds start to fly, each repeats the note three or four times. These notes develop into a song as the summer comes on; a lisping, peculiar song that tells that the flocks are resolving into pairs as the duties of the season press upon them." After the pairing season there is a great show of affection between the two birds, which often continues long after the nesting season has closed.

THE PREACHER-BIRD

(Red-eyed Vireo.)

JENNY TERRILL RUPRECHT

LISTEN near a grove of elms or maples and you will not fail to hear its song, a some what broken, rambling recitative, which no one has so well described as Wilson Flagg, who calls this bird the preacher, and interprets its notes as "*You see it! You know it! Do you hear me? Do you believe it?*" —*Chapman's Bird-Life*.

Apostle of the grove across the way,
Surpliced in color of the foliage,
I list enchanted to thy sermon-lay,
As if it were the wisdom of a sage;
"You see it! You know it! Do you hear me? Do you believe it?"
Ah! thou wouldst quicken memory to-day.

Nor morning's chill, nor noon-tide's languorous heat,
Doth hold thy voice in thrall, O, preacher fair;
Perched on the greenest bough, thy message sweet
Thou pourest out upon the vibrant air,
"You see it! You know it! Do you hear me? Do you believe it?"
Over and over in a swift repeat.

Apostle of the grove! Thy song divine
The God of Nature gave thee note by note,
To gladder, fuller make the message thine,
Rippling in beauty from thy dainty throat.
"You see it! You know it! Do you hear me? Do you believe it?"
Would that apostleship so sweet were mine!

COFFEE

ANNA R. HENDERSON

COFFEE is a native of Abyssinia, being first used by the natives of the district called Kaffa, whence its name. It is still found wild in parts of Africa.

It was introduced into Arabia in the fifteenth century, and is so well suited to that soil and climate that the Mocha coffee has never been excelled. It became so popular that in 1638 the Mohammedan priests issued an edict against it, as the faithful frequented the coffee shops more than the mosques.

In 1638 the beverage was sold in Paris, but did not win favor for a few years until it was introduced to the aristocracy by Soliman Aga, the Ambassador of the Sublime Porte at the Court of Louis XIV. Coffee sipping became fashionable, and before the middle of the seventeenth century was the mode in all the capitals of Europe.

Cromwell ordered the closing of the coffee shops of England, but its popularity did not wane.

In 1699 coffee was planted in Batavia and Java. In 1720 three coffee shrubs were sent from the Jardin des Plantes in France to the Island of Martinique.

The voyage was long, and water becoming scarce two of the plants perished, but Captain Declieux shared his ration of water with the other plant, and it lived to become the ancestor of all the coffee groves in America.

On the coat of arms of Brazil which adorns every flag of that country is a branch of coffee, a fit emblem, as Brazil produces three-fourths of the coffee of the world. It was first planted there in 1754, and the first cargo was shipped to the United States in 1809.

It can be grown from seeds or from slips. Shrubs begin bearing the second or third year, and are profitable for fifteen years, some trees continue bearing for twenty-five years.

They are planted six or eight feet apart, and not allowed to grow more than twelve feet high; and are not pruned, so that the limbs bend nearly to the ground. The long slender drooping branches bear dark green, glossy leaves, directly opposite to each other. Between these leaves bloom the flowers; clusters of five or six white star-shaped blossoms, each an inch in diameter. These jessamine-like flowers touch each other, forming a long snowy spray bordered with green. Nothing can exceed the beauty of a coffee grove in bloom, and its fragrance makes it a veritable Eden.

It is beautiful again when the berries are ripe. They resemble a large cranberry, each berry containing two grains, the flat sides together. The fruit is slightly sweet but not desirable. Three crops are gathered in one year. I have in memory a coffee plantation in the mountains of Brazil, where the pickers were African slaves. They made a picturesque sight, picking into white sacks swung in front of them, occasionally emptying the fruit into broad, flat baskets. Each man will pick more than thirty pounds a day, and at sunset they wind down the mountain paths with their broad baskets of red berries balanced on their heads.

The ripe fruit is put through a mill which removes the pulp. The wet berries are then spread to dry in the sun on a floor of hardened earth, brick or slate.

The coffee terrane in my memory was about eighty feet square, laid with smooth slate, and slightly sloping. It had around it a moulding of plaster with spaces of perforated zinc for the escape of water. Orange and fig trees dropped their fruit over its border and it was an ideal spot for a moonlight dance. The coffee house was near, and an approaching cloud was a signal to gather the coffee in.

When dry the grains are put through a mill, or where primitive methods prevail, pounded in a mortar to remove a thin brittle shell which encloses each grain. The coffee is then put into sacks of five *arrobas*, or 160 pounds each and carted to the warehouses of the city.

AN ABANDONED HOME

BY ELANORA KINSLEY MARBLE

"Say, was thy little mate unkind,
And heard thee as the careless wind?
Oh! nought but love and sorrow joined
Such notes of woe could waken."

CHAPTER II

"WELL, I'm glad to get over to this tree again out of the sound of mother's voice. Duty to my husband; that's all she could talk about. All wives help to build the home-nest," she says, "and indeed do the most toward making it snug and comfortable, and that I must give up my old pastimes and pleasures and settle down to housekeeping. Well, if I must, I must, but oh! how I wish I had never got married."

Not a word was exchanged between the pair that night, and on the following morning Mrs. B., with a disdainful toss of her head, ironically announced her willingness to become a hod-carrier, a mason, or a carpenter, according the desires of her lord.

They elected to build their nest in the maple-tree, and you can imagine the bickerings of the pair as the house progressed. Mrs. B's. groans and bemoaning over the effect, such "fetchings and carryings" would have upon her health, already delicate. How often she was compelled from weakness and fatigue to tuck her head under her wing and rest, while Mr. B. carried on the work tireless and uncomplaining.

"She may change when she has the responsibility of a family," he mused, "and perhaps become a helpmeet after all. I must not be too severe with her, so young and thoughtless and inexperienced."

So the nest at length was completed.

"My!" said a sharp-eyed old lady bird, whose curiosity led her to take a peep at the domicile one day while Mrs. B. was off visiting with one of her neighbors, "such an uncomfortable, ragged looking nest; it is not even domed as a nest should be when built in a tree. And then the lining! If the babies escape drowning in the first down-pour, I am sure they'll be crippled for life, if not hung outright, when they attempt to leave the nest. You know how dangerous it is when they get their feet entangled in the rag ravelings and coils of string, and if you'll believe me that shiftless Jenny has just laid a lot of it around the edges of the nest without ever tucking it in. The way girls are brought up now-a-days! Accomplishments indeed! I think," with a sniff, "if she had been taught something about housekeeping instead of how to arrange her feathers prettily, to dance and sing, and fly in graceful circles it would have been much better for poor Mr. B. Poor fellow, how I do pity him," and off the old lady flew to talk it over with another neighbor.

Unlike some young wives of the sparrow family, Mrs. B. did not sit on the first almost spotless white egg which she deposited in the nest, but waited till four others, prettily spotted with brown, and black, and lavender lay beside it.

"Whine, whine from morning till night!" cried her exasperated spouse after brooding had begun. "Sitting still so much, you say, doesn't agree with you. Your beauty is departing! You are growing thin and careworn! The little outings you take are only tantalizing. I am sure most wives

wouldn't consider it a hardship to sit still and be fed with the delicious grubs and dainty tidbits which I go to such pains to fetch for you. That was a particularly fine grub I brought you this morning, and you ate it without one word of thanks, or even a look of gratitude. Nothing but complaints and tears! It is enough to drive any husband mad. I fly away in the morning with a heavy heart, and when I see and hear other sparrows hopping and singing cheerfully about their nests, receiving chirps of encouragement and love from their sitting mates in return, I feel as though – as though I would rather die than be compelled to return to my unhappy home again."

"Oh, you do?" sarcastically rejoined Mrs. B. "That is of a piece with the rest of your selfishness, Mr. Britisher, I am sure. Die and leave me, the partner of your bosom, to struggle through the brooding season and afterward bring up our large family the best I may. Oh," breaking into tears, "I wish I had never seen you, I really do."

"Oh, yes, that has been the burden of your song for days, Mrs. B. I'm sure I have no reason to bless the hour I first laid eyes on you. Why, as the saying goes, Mrs. B., you threw yourself at my head at our very first meeting. And your precious mamma! How she did chirp about her darling Jenny's accomplishments and sweet amiability. Bah, what a ninny I was, to be sure! Oh, you needn't shriek and pluck the feathers from your head. Truth burns sometimes, I know, and – oh you are going to faint. Well faint!" and with an exclamation more forcible than polite Mr. B. flew away out of sight and sound of his weeping spouse.

Wearily and sadly did Mrs. B. gaze out of her humble home upon darkening nature that evening. Many hours had passed since the flight of Mr. B., and the promptings of hunger, if nothing else, caused her to gaze about, wistfully hoping for his return. The calls of other birds to their mates filled the air, and lent an additional mournfulness to her lonely situation.

"How glad I shall be to see him," she thought, her heart warming toward him in his absence. "I'll be cheerful and pretend to be contented after this, for I should be very miserable without him. I have been very foolish, and given him cause for all the harsh things he has said, perhaps. Oh, I *do* wish he would come."

Night came down, dark and lonely. The voices and whirrings of her neighbors' wings had long since given place to stillness as one after another retired for the night. The wind swayed the branches of the tree in which she nested, their groanings and the sharp responses of the leaves filling the watcher's mind with gloomy forebodings.

"I am so frightened," she murmured, "there is surely going to be a storm. Oh, I wish I had listened to Mr. B. and not insisted upon building our home in the crotch of this tree. He said it was not wise, and that we would be much safer and snugger under the eaves or in a hole in the wall or tree. But, no, I said, if I was compelled to stay at home every day and sit upon the nest it should be situated where I could look out and see my neighbors as they flew about. That was the reason I was determined it should not be domed. I wanted to see and be seen. Oh, how foolish I have been! What shall I do? What shall I do? I am afraid to leave the nest even for a minute for fear the eggs will get cold. Mr. B. would never forgive me, then, I am sure. But to stay out here in the storm, all alone. Oh, I shall die, I know I shall."

Morning broke with all nature, after the rain, smiling and refreshed. Sleep had not visited the eyelids of the forsaken wife and with heavy eyes and throbbing brain, she viewed the rising dawn.

"Alas," she sighed, as the whirr of wings and happy chirps of her neighbors struck upon her ears, "how can people be joyous when aching hearts and lives broken with misery lie at their very thresholds? The songs and gleeful voices of my neighbors fill me with anger and despair. I hate the world and everybody in it. I am cold and wet and hungry. I even hate the sun that has risen to usher in a new day.

"I must make an effort," she murmured as the morning advanced and Mr. B. did not return, "and get home to mother. I am so weak I can scarcely stand, much less fly. I am burning with fever,

and oh, how my head throbs! Such trouble and sorrow for one so young! I feel as though I shall never smile again."

She steadied herself upon the edge of the nest and, turning, gazed wistfully and sadly upon the five tiny eggs, which she now sorrowed to abandon.

"I may return," she sighed, "in time to lend them warmth, or may find my dear mate performing that office in my absence. I will pray that it may be so as I fly. Praises would be mockery from my throat to-day, mockery!"

"Why, Jenny!" shrieked her mother as Mrs. B. sank down exhausted upon the threshold of her old home. "Whatever *is* the matter with you, and what has brought you here this time of day?"

"I am hungry and sick, mother, and I feel as though, as though – I am going to die!"

"And where is Mr. Britisher? You've no business to be hungry with a husband to care for you," tartly replied her mother, whilst bustling about to find a grub or two to supply her daughter's wants.

"I have no husband, I fear, mother. He is –"

"Dead!" shrieked the old lady. "Don't tell me Mr. Britisher is dead!"

"Dead, or worse," sadly replied her daughter.

"Worse? Heaven defend us! You don't mean he has deserted you?"

"He left me yesterday afternoon in anger, and has not returned."

"Highty, tighy, that's it, is it? Well, you have brought it all upon yourself and will have to suffer for it. I am sure your father talked enough about idleness and vanity for you to have heeded, and time and time again I have told you that every husband in the sparrow family is a bully and a tyrant, and every wife, if she expects to live happily, must let her mate have his own way."

Mrs. B. sighed, and wearily dropped her head upon her breast.

"You must go back," emphatically said her mother, "before the neighborhood gets wind of the affair. Mr. Britisher may be home this very minute, and glad enough he will be to see you, I am sure. So go back, dear, before the eggs grow cold and your neighbors will be none the wiser."

"I am going, mother, but oh, I feel so ill, so ill!" said the bereaved little creature as she wearily poised for her flight.

"She does look weakly and sick, poor thing," said the mother with a sigh watching her out of sight, "but I don't believe in interfering between husband and wife. Mr. Britisher, indeed, gave me to understand from the first that the less he saw of his mother-in-law the better, remarking that if that class would only stay at home and manage their own household affairs fewer couples, he thought, would be parted. I considered that a rather broad hint, and in consequence have never visited them since they began housekeeping. He has only gone off in a huff, of course, and everything will come out all right, I am sure."

Ere nightfall, however, motherly anxiety impelled her to fly over to her daughter's home.

Alas, only desolation and ruin were there. At the foot of the tree lay the form of Mrs. B. Exposure, sorrow, and excitement had done their work. It was a lifeless form which met her tearful gaze.

The fate of Mr. Britisher was never known. Rumor assigned his absence to matrimonial infelicity, but his more charitable neighbors, as they dropped a tear to his memory, pictured his mangled form a victim to the wanton cruelty or mischievous sport of some idle boy.

A gentleman passing by one day saw the dismantled nest upon the ground and carelessly stirred it with his cane.

"What is that, uncle?" queried a little maid of some five summers who walked by his side.

"That, little one," came the answer slowly and impressively, "is an abandoned home."

"An abandoned home," I repeated, as his words floated up to my window. "Aye, truly to the casual observer that is all it seems, but, oh, how little do they dream of the folly, the suffering, the sad, almost tragic ending of the wee feathered couple whom I saw build that humble home."

THE CONY

C. C. M

THE specimen of this animal presented here (*Hyrax abyssinicus*) is the best-known of the species. It measures from ten to twelve inches in length; the fur consists of somewhat long, fine hairs, gray-brown at the base, lighter gray in the middle portions, merging into a dark-brown surmounted by a light-colored tip, the resulting general color of this combination being a mottled pale-gray.

The Book of Proverbs, enumerating four animals which it describes as "exceeding wise," says: "The conies are but a feeble folk, yet they make their houses in the rocks." The conies are mentioned by various writers as well-known animals in days of remotest antiquity. They are found in the wild, desolate mountain regions of Africa and western Asia, and the variety inhabiting Syria and Palestine is probably referred to in the Hebrew text of the Bible under the name of "laphan," which Luther translated by the word, "rabbit," and in the authorized and revised versions is rendered "cony." They inhabit all the mountains of Syria, Palestine, and Arabia, perhaps also of Persia, the Nile country, east, west, and south Africa, frequently at elevations of six thousand or nine thousand feet above sea-level, and "the peaks and cones that rise like islands sheer above the surface of the plains – the presence of the little animals constituting one of the characteristic features of the high table-lands of northeastern Africa." It is stated that if the observer quietly passes through the valleys he sees them sitting or lying in rows on the projecting ledges, as they are a lazy, comfort-loving tribe and like to bask in the warm sunshine. A rapid movement or unusual noise quickly stampedes them, and they all flee with an agility like that usual among rodents, and almost instantly disappear. A traveler says of them, that in the neighborhood of villages, where they are also to be found, they show little fear of the natives, and boldly attend to their affairs as if they understood that nobody thinks of molesting them; but when approached by people whose color or attire differs from that of their usual human neighbors, they at once retreat to their holes in the rocks. A dog inspires them with greater fear than does a human being. When startled by a canine foe, even after they have become hidden, safe from pursuit, in their rocky crevices, they continue to give utterance to their curious, tremulous yell, which resembles the cry of small monkeys.

Brehm confirms the statement of another traveler, who called attention to the striking fact that the peaceable and defenseless cony lives in the permanent society and on the best of terms with a by no means despicable beast of prey, a variety of mongoose.

In regard to their movements and mental characteristics, the conies have been placed between the unwieldy rhinoceros and the nimble rodent. They are excellent climbers. The soles of the feet are as elastic and springy as rubber, enabling the animal to contract and distend the middle cleft or fissure of its sole-pad at will, and thereby to secure a hold on a smooth surface by means of suction. In behavior the conies are gentle, simple, and timid. The social instinct is highly developed in them, and they are rarely seen alone.

The conies have been regarded as the smallest and daintiest of all the existing species of odd-toed animals. Naturalists, however, have held widely divergent opinions as to the classification of the pretty cliff-dwellers. Pallas, because of their habits and outward appearance, called them rodents. Oken thought them to be related to the marsupials, or pouched animals. Cuvier placed them in his order of "many-toed animals," which classification has also been disputed, and Huxley has raised them to the dignity of representatives of a distinct order. Who shall decide where all pretend to know?

COFFEE

(Coffea Arabica L.)

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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