

# VARIOUS

BIRDS, ILLUSTRATED BY  
COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY,  
VOL. 2, NO. 2

**Various**  
**Birds, Illustrated by Color**  
**Photography, Vol. 2, No. 2**

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Birds, Illustrated by Color Photography, Vol. 2, No. 2 August, 1897:*

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# **Various Birds, Illustrated by Color Photography, Vol. 2, No. 2 August, 1897**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This is the second volume of a series intended to present, in accurate colored portraiture, and in popular and juvenile biographical text, a very considerable portion of the common birds of North America, and many of the more interesting and attractive specimens of other countries, in many respects superior to all other publications which have attempted the representation of birds, and at infinitely less expense. The appreciative reception by the public of Vol. I deserves our grateful acknowledgement. Appearing in monthly parts, it has been read and admired by thousands of people, who, through the life-like pictures presented, have made the acquaintance of many birds, and have since become enthusiastic observers of them. It has been introduced into the public schools, and is now in use as a text book by hundreds of teachers, who have expressed enthusiastic approval of the work and of its general extension.

The faithfulness to nature of the pictures, in color and pose, have been commended by such ornithologists and authors as Dr. Elliott Coues, Mr. John Burroughs, Mr. J. W. Allen, editor of *The Auk*, Mr. Frank M. Chapman, Mr. J. W. Baskett, and others.

The general text of *Birds* – the biographies – has been conscientiously prepared from the best authorities by a careful observer of the feather-growing denizens of the field, the forest, and the shore, while the juvenile autobiographies have received the approval of the highest ornithological authority.

The publishers take pleasure in the announcement that the general excellence of *Birds* will be maintained in subsequent volumes. The subjects selected for the third and fourth volumes – many of them – will be of the rare beauty in which the great Audubon, the limner *par excellence* of birds, would have found “the joy of imitation.”

*Nature Study Publishing Company.*

# BIRD SONG

WE made several early morning excursions into the woods and fields during the month of June, and were abundantly rewarded in many ways – by beholding the gracious awakening of Nature in her various forms, kissed into renewed activity by the radiance of morn; by the sweet smelling air filled with the perfume of a multitude of opening flowers which had drunk again the dew of heaven; by the sight of flitting clouds across the bluest of skies, patching the green earth with moving shadows, and sweetest of all, by the twittering, calling, musical sounds of love and joy which came to the ear from the throats of the feathered throng. How pleasant to lie prone on one's back on the cool grass, and gaze upward through the shady green canopy of boughs, watching the pretty manoeuvres, the joyous greetings, the lively anxieties, the graceful movements, and even the sorrowful happenings of the bird-life above us.

Listen to the variety of their tones, as manifest as the difference of form and color. What more interesting than to observe their habits, and discover their cosy nests with their beautiful eggs in the green foliage? Strange that so many persons think only of making a collection of them, robbing the nests with heartless indifference to the suffering of the parents, to say nothing of the invasion which they make of the undoubted rights the birds have from nature to protection and perpetuation.

Strictly speaking, there are few birds to which the word “singing” can properly be applied, the majority of them not having more than two or three notes, and they with little suggestion of music in them. Chanticleer crows, his spouse cackles or clucks, as may be suitable to the occasion. To what ear are these noises musical? They are rather language, and, in fact, the varying notes of every species of bird have a significance which can alone be interpreted by its peculiar habits. If careful note be made of the immediate conduct of the male or female bird, as the case may be, after each call or sound, the meaning of it becomes plain.

A hen whose chicks are scattered in search of food, upon seeing a hawk, utters a note of warning which we have all heard, and the young scamper to her for protection beneath her wings. When she has laid an egg, *Cut-cut-cut-cut-ot-cut!* announces it from the nest in the barn. When the chicks are hatched, her *cluck, cluck, cluck*, calls them from the nest in the wide world, and her *chick, chick, chick*, uttered quickly, selects for them the dainty which she has found, or teaches them what is proper for their diet. A good listener will detect enough intonations in her voice to constitute a considerable vocabulary, which, if imitated

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# THE AMERICAN OSPREY

Here is the picture of a remarkable bird. We know him better by the name Fish Hawk. He looks much like the Eagle in July "Birds." The Osprey has no use for Mr. Eagle though.

You know the Bald Eagle or Sea Eagle is very fond of fish. Well, he is not a very good fisherman and from his lofty perch he watches for the Fish Hawk or Osprey. Do you ask why? Well, when he sees a Fish Hawk with his prey, he is sure to chase him and take it from him. It is for this reason that Ospreys dislike the Bald Eagle.

Their food is fish, which as a rule they catch alive.

It must be interesting to watch the Osprey at his fishing. He wings his way slowly over the water, keeping a watch for fish as they appear near the surface.

When he sees one that suits him, he hovers a moment, and then, closing his wings, falls upon the fish.

Sometimes he strikes it with such force that he disappears in the water for a moment. Soon we see him rise from the water with the prey in his claws.

He then flies to some tall tree and if he has not been discovered by his enemy, the Eagle, can have a good meal for his hard work.

Look at his claws; then think of them striking a fish as they must when he plunges from on high.



A gentleman tells of an Osprey that fastened his claws in a fish that was too large for him.

The fish drew him under and nothing more was seen of Mr. Osprey. The same gentleman tells of a fish weighing six pounds that fell from the claws of a Fish Hawk that became frightened by an Eagle.

The Osprey builds his nest much like the Bald Eagle. It is usually found in a tall tree and out of reach.

Like the Eagle, he uses the same nest each year, adding to it. Sometimes it measures five feet high and three feet across. One nest that was found, contained enough sticks, cornstalks, weeds, moss, and the like, to fill a cart, and made a load for a horse to draw. Like the Crows and Blackbirds they prefer to live together in numbers. Over three hundred nests have been found in the trees on a small island.

One thing I want you to remember about the Osprey. They usually remain mated for life.

# THE AMERICAN OSPREY

AN interesting bird, "Winged Fisher," as he has been happily called, is seen in places suited to his habits, throughout temperate North America, particularly about islands and along the seacoast. At Shelter Island, New York, they are exceedingly variable in the choice of a nesting place. On Gardiner's Island they all build in trees at a distance varying from ten to seventy-five feet from the ground; on Plum Island, where large numbers of them nest, many place their nests on the ground, some being built up to a height of four or five feet while others are simply a few sticks arranged in a circle, and the eggs laid on the bare sand. On Shelter Island they build on the chimneys of houses, and a pair had a nest on the cross-bar of a telegraph pole. Another pair had a nest on a large rock. These were made of coarse sticks and sea weed, anything handy, such as bones, old shoes, straw, etc. A curious nest was found some years ago on the coast of New Jersey. It contained three eggs, and securely imbedded in the loose material of the Osprey's nest was a nest of the Purple Grackle, containing five eggs, while at the bottom of the Hawk's nest was a thick, rotten limb, in which was a Tree Swallow's nest of seven eggs.

In the spring and early autumn this familiar eagle-like bird can be seen hovering over creek, river, and sound. It is recognized by its popular name of Fish-Hawk. Following a school of fish, it dashes from a considerable height to seize its prey with its stout

claws. If the fish is small it is at once swallowed, if it is large, (and the Osprey will occasionally secure shad, blue fish, bass, etc., weighing five or six pounds,) the fish is carried to a convenient bluff or tree and torn to bits. The Bald Eagle often robs him of the fish by seizing it, or startling him so that he looses his hold.

The Osprey when fishing makes one of the most breezy, spirited pictures connected with the feeding habits of any of our birds, as often there is a splashing and a struggle under water when the fish grasped is too large or the great talons of the bird gets entangled. He is sometimes carried under and drowned, and large fish have been washed ashore with these birds fastened to them by the claws.

Mrs. Mabel Osgood Wright says: "I found an Osprey's nest in a crooked oak on Wakeman's Island in late April, 1893. As I could not get close to the nest (the island is between a network of small creeks, and the flood tides covered the marshes,) I at first thought it was a monstrous crow's nest, but on returning the second week in May I saw a pair of Ospreys coming and going to and fro from the nest. I hoped the birds might return another season, as the nest looked as if it might have been used for two or three years, and was as lop-sided as a poorly made haystack. The great August storm of the same year broke the tree, and the nest fell, making quite a heap upon the ground. Among the debris were sticks of various sizes, dried reeds, two bits of bamboo fishing rod, seaweeds, some old blue mosquito netting, and some rags of fish net, also about half a bushel of salt hay in various stages of

decomposition, and malodorous dirt galore.”

It is well known that Ospreys, if not disturbed, will continue indefinitely to heap rubbish upon their nests till their bulk is very great. Like the Owls they can reverse the rear toe.

# THE SORA RAIL

VARIOUS are the names required to distinguish the little slate-colored Carolina Rail from its brethren, Sora, Common Rail, and, on the Potomac river, Ortolan, being among them. He is found throughout temperate North America, in the weedy swamps of the Atlantic states in great abundance, in the Middle states, and in California. In Ohio he is a common summer resident, breeding in the extensive swamps and wet meadows. The nest is a rude affair made of grass and weeds, placed on the ground in a tussock of grass in a boggy tract of land, where there is a growth of briars, etc., where he may skulk and hide in the wet grass to elude observation. The nest may often be discovered at a distance by the appearance of the surrounding grass, the blades of which are in many cases interwoven over the nest, apparently to shield the bird from the fierce rays of the sun, which are felt with redoubled force on the marshes.

The Rails feed on both vegetable and animal food. During the months of September and October, the weeds and wild oats swarm with them. They feed on the nutritious seeds, small snail shells, worms and larvae of insects, which they extract from the mud. The habits of the Sora Rail, its thin, compressed body, its aversion to take wing, and the dexterity with which it runs or conceals itself among the grass and sedge, are exactly similar to those of the more celebrated Virginia Rail.

The Sora frequents those parts of marshes preferably where fresh water springs rise through the morass. Here it generally constructs its nest, "one of which," says an observer, "we had the good fortune to discover. It was built in the bottom of a tuft of grass in the midst of an almost impenetrable quagmire, and was composed altogether of old wet grass and rushes. The eggs had been flooded out of the nest by the extraordinary rise of the tide in a violent northwest storm, and lay scattered about the drift weed. The usual number of eggs is from six to ten. They are of a dirty white or pale cream color, sprinkled with specks of reddish and pale purple, most numerous near the great end."

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