

AUGUST DAYS WITH THE BIRDS.

BY LYNDS JONES.

Because the ten-day camp was primarily a family plan carried into execution from the 14th to the 24th inclusive, should not create prejudice against the work with the birds. A family camp entails more labor and attention in the stages preparatory to being comfortable than a purely stag bird camp, to be sure, but it takes the birds some little time to adjust themselves to the intrusion. Besides, camp preparation should never be allowed to wholly eclipse the birds.

A camp site on a grassy bench just below the level of the high plain of the country, and some sixty feet above the river, called Vermillion because its flood waters are stained red by the disintegrating red Bedford shale, with a clear spring, a spreading oak, and the river valley bending to right and left, and little else may be wished for—except fair weather.

Meadows, wheat stubble, hay land, corn fields, gardens, orchards, fence tangles, pastures, on the uplands; berry, grape, burning bush tangles, brush thickets, well grown trees, on the steep slopes of the river valley; shale cliffs, willow islands, and across the river a deep and extensive woods with here and there thickets of white cedar and white pine, constitute a well diversified environment. Swamps and extensive water surface are not found anywhere in the region.

Midsummer temperatures prevailed. The mercury stood about 70° during the night, and frequently reached 84° during the day, once mounting to 86°. Breezes were light to brisk, always from the southwest, except during the numerous thunder squalls, when they became high and blew from every direction except east. The sky averaged fair. There were no dark days.

Mosquitoes, gnats, and horse flies there were, but in endurable numbers. Of the hosts of common flies no account need be taken. Ants figured only in the vicinity of the sugar can.

While the tent was being pitched a Turkey Vulture called to inquire about our garbage, but departed red-headed when he

learned that there was to be none. Later I saw him, with five of his fellows, impatiently wheeling over a woods pasture.

A Cooper Hawk was chased into our trees by ten Crows, and held there for half an hour despite his efforts to evade them. We brought no gun. Afterward I saw him worrying a Red-tailed Hawk several planes above the Crows.

Field Sparrows and Wood Pewees sang all day and every day, but the Red-eyed Vireo seldom sang except during the early morning and evening hours. When heard at all at mid-day he was fretful and scolding. A young Baltimore Oriole in full song visited us regularly about noon, and again about four in the afternoon. Once a Scarlet Tanager sang at mid-day. From nine in the morning until three in the afternoon there was so little bird life evident that the casual observer would pronounce birds almost absent.

As evening approached many of the birds sang in nearly full voice. Towhees mounted the tree-tops in the river valley; Cardinals whistled from thickets or responded to call and paid a visit to the camp environs; Indigo Buntings adorned the leafless tops of trees everywhere; Carolina Wren echoed from the distance, then startled us by bursting forth in the bush by the hammock; Mourning Doves crooned from the dead elm just around the bend. Catbirds, Goldfinches, Kingbirds, Baltimore Orioles, Robins, Chickadees, and Flickers sang lustily. Barn and Rough-winged Swallows and Chimney Swifts swung back and forth through the gorge at our feet, and Great Blue and Green Herons and Belted Kingfishers flashed in and out over the river on their way up and down.

As silence fell with the gathering shadows, the distant quaver of the Screech Owl grew more and more distinct, answering back and forth from grove to bank, until the approaching bird stood just above the tent pole. A low answering quaver from inside the tent brought him to the canvas for the second before the strangeness reached his brain—that was enough. No other owls were heard during the ten days and nights.

The species represented by the greatest number of individuals was clearly the Bobolink, every bird in the fall dress. There was not a minute during the day when either many of the birds

were seen or the tinkling of their calls was heard from the fields or from the air as they flew over the valley from field to field. It has never been my lot to see as numerous a host of these birds. They associated with Vesper and English Sparrows, and with Cowbirds, and were more numerous than all of them together. Some of the young were molting, but all of the adults had completed the molt before the beginning of my observations at the camp.

Sallies into the woods and fields from the camp brought to light forty-seven species for the ten days, of which twenty-seven might be said to be singing birds, and of this number fifteen were in full voice, at some time during the day. It should be remarked, however, that the singing individuals seemed to form a small minority of the individuals of the species, except in the case of the Goldfinches, Carolina Wrens and Cardinals.

I was unable to find a single migrating bird. This was somewhat of a disappointment, since migrating individuals of certain species had been reported from Detroit before the 10th of the month. If southward migrations occur in this part of the state they must be represented by very few individuals or there would be some records made. Possibly we are so far out of the line of southward movement that it is only at flood tide that the migrants reach us.

To the doubting Thomases I am glad to be able to say that bird study in August is both pleasant and feasible. The terrors of heat and insect are more in the imagination than reality. I say this not after a single experience, but after a trial of several years in regions which insects infest in numbers, and under conditions of high temperatures. The profit in the study is great.

TWO DAYS WITH THE BEACH BIRDS AND BOTANISTS.

BY CHRESWELL HUNT.

When asked to accompany the Philadelphia Botanical Club on a field trip to Stone Harbor, N. J., on September 3d and 4th, I gladly accepted the invitation. To be sure it was not an or-



Jones, Lynds. 1906. "August Days with the Birds." *The Wilson bulletin* 18(3), 95–97.

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