THE PRIDE OF CHINA, OR BEAD-TREE.

MELIA AZEDARACH, *Linn.*, Sp. Plant., p. 550.—DECANDRIA MONOGYNIA, *Linn.*—MELIÆ, *Juss.*

Distinguished by its bipinnate shining leaves, with ferruginous dots beneath. In the south of Europe, the nuts are bored and strung by the Roman Catholics.

THE WARBLING VIREO, OR GREENLET.

+VIREO GILVUS, *Vieill.*

PLATE CCXLI.—MALE AND FEMALE.

While at the little village, now the city of Camden, in New Jersey, where I had gone for the purpose of watching the passage of certain Warblers on their way north early in the month of May, I took lodgings in a street ornamented with a long avenue of tall Lombardy poplars, one of which almost touched my window. On it too I had the pleasure shortly afterwards of finding the nest of this interesting little bird. Never before had I seen it placed so low, and never before had I an opportunity of examining it, or of observing the particular habits of the species with so much advantage. The nest, although formed nearly in the same manner as several others, which I have since obtained by cutting them down with rifle balls, from the top twigs of the tall trees to which they were attached, instead of being fastened in the fork of a twig, was fixed to the body of the tree, and that of a branch coming off at a very acute angle. The birds were engaged in constructing it during eight days, working chiefly in the morning and evening. Previous to their selecting the spot, I frequently saw them examining the tree, warbling together as if congratulating each other on their good fortune in finding so snug a place. One morning I observed both of them at work; they had already attached some slender blades of grass to the knots on the branch and the bark of the trunk, and had given them a circular disposition. They continued working downwards and outwards, until the structure

exhibited the form of their delicate tenement. Before the end of the second day, bits of hornets' nests and particles of corn-husks had been attached to it by pushing them between the rows of grass, and fixing them with silky substances. On the third day, the birds were absent, nor could I hear them anywhere in the neighbourhood, and thinking that a cat might have caught them from the edge of the roof, I despaired of seeing them again. On the fourth morning, however, their notes attracted my attention before I rose, and I had the pleasure of finding them at their labours. The materials which they now used consisted chiefly of extremely slender grasses, which the birds worked in a circular form within the frame which they had previously made. The little creatures were absent nearly an hour at a time, and returned together bringing the grass, which I concluded they found at a considerable distance. Going into the street to see in what direction they went, I watched them for some time, and followed them as they flew from tree to tree towards the river. There they stopped, and looked as if carefully watching me, on which I retired to a small distance, when they resumed their journey, and led me quite out of the village, to a large meadow, where stood an old hay-stack. They alighted on it, and in a few minutes each had selected a blade of grass. Returning by the same route, they moved so slowly from one tree to another, that my patience was severely tried. Two other days were consumed in travelling for the same kind of grass. On the seventh I saw only the female at work, using wool and horse-hair. The eighth was almost entirely spent by both in smoothing the inside. They would enter the nest, sit in it, turn round, and press the lining, I should suppose a hundred times or more in the course of an hour. The male had ceased to warble, and both birds exhibited great concern. They went off and returned so often that I actually became quite tired of this lesson in the art of nest-building, and perhaps I should not have looked at them more that day, had not the cat belonging to the house made her appearance just over my head, on the roof, within a few feet of the nest, and at times so very near the affrighted and innocent creatures, that my interest was at once renewed. I gave chase to grimalkin, and saved the Vireos at least for that season.

In the course of five days, an equal number of eggs was laid. They were small, of a rather narrow oval form, white, thinly spotted with reddish-black at the larger end. The birds sat alternately, though not with regularity as to time, and on the twelfth day of incubation the young came out. I observed that the male would bring insects to the female, and that after chopping and macerating them with her beak, she placed them in the mouth of her young with a care and delicacy which were not less curious than pleasing to me. Three or four days after, the male fed them also, and I

thought that I saw them grow every time I turned from my drawing to peep at them.

On the fifteenth day, about eight in the morning, the little birds all stood on the border of the nest, and were fed as usual. They continued there the remainder of the day, and about sunset re-entered the nest. The old birds I had frequently observed roosted within about a foot above them. On the sixteenth day after their exclusion from the egg, they took to wing, and ascended the branches of the tree, with surprising ease and firmness. They were fed another day after, on the same tree, and roosted close together in a row on a small twig, the parents just above them. The next morning they flew across the street, and betook themselves to a fine peach-orchard several hundred yards from my lodging. Never had HUBER watched the operations of his bees with more intentness than I had employed on this occasion, and I bade them adieu at last with great regret.

The principal food of this species consists of small black caterpillars, which that season infested all the poplars in the street. They searched for them in the manner of the Red-eyed Vireo and Blue-eyed Yellow Warbler, moving sidewise along the twigs, like the latter, now and then balancing themselves on the wing opposite their prey, and snapping it in the manner of the *Muscicapa Ruticilla*, sometimes alighting sidewise on the tree, seldom sallying forth in pursuit of insects more than a few yards, and always preferring to remain among the branches. I never saw either of the old birds disgorge pellets, as I have seen Pewees do.

I observed that they now and then stood in a stiffened attitude, balancing their body from side to side on the joint of the tarsus and toes, as on a hinge, but could not discover the import of this singular action. During the love days of the pair mentioned above, the male would spread its little wings and tail, and strut in short circles round the female, pouring out a low warble so sweet and mellow that I can compare it only to the sounds of a good musical box. The female received these attentions without coyness, and I have often thought that these birds had been attached to each other before that season.

No name could have been imposed upon this species with more propriety than that of the Warbling Vireo. The male sings from morning to night, so sweetly, so tenderly, with so much mellowness and softness of tone, and yet with notes so low, that one might think he sings only for his beloved, without the least desire to attract the attention of rivals. In this he differs greatly from most other birds. Even its chiding notes—*tschë, tschë*, were low and unobtruding. The nestlings uttered a lisping sound, not unlike that of a young mouse. The only time I saw the old birds ruffled, was on discovering a brown lizard ascending their tree. They attacked it courageously,

indeed furiously, and although I did not see them strike it, compelled it to leave the place.

The flight of the Warbling Vireo is performed by gentle glidings, and seldom extends to a greater length than a hundred yards at a time. I never saw it on the ground.

It was never observed by me in Louisiana or Kentucky, nor does it pass along the maritime districts of Georgia or the Carolinas; but from Virginia to Maine it is not uncommon, although I saw none farther north. It arrives in the Jerseys and Pennsylvania about the first of May, some years perhaps a little earlier, and proceeds farther east as the season advances. I do not think that it raises more than one brood each season, although I have observed it as late as the 15th of October in the Middle Districts, where I believe the greater number of these birds spend the summer. Not one could I see during the winter in the Floridas, where, however, the White-eyed and Red-eyed Vireos were frequently heard in full song.

It is very surprising that this species, which is found on the Columbia river, and in our Middle and Eastern Districts, enters, traverses, and leaves the United States in a manner unknown to any one. When on my way to the Texas, I met with most of our small birds, but with none of this species.

WARBLING FLYCATCHER, *Muscicapa melodia*, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. v. p. 85.

VIREO GILVUS, Bonap. Syn., p. 70.

WARBLING VIREO, Nutt. Man., vol. i. p. 309.

WARBLING FLYCATCHER OR VIREO, *Vireo gilvus*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. ii. p. 114; vol. v. p. 433.

Upper parts light greenish-olive, the head and hind neck greyish-brown; a white band over the eye; wings and tail brown, quills edged with green; lower parts dull yellowish-white, the sides tinged with yellow.

Male, $5\frac{1}{4}$, $8\frac{1}{2}$.

From Texas to Maine, and in the interior to Columbia river. Abundant. Migratory.

THE SWAMP MAGNOLIA.

MAGNOLIA GLAUCA, Willd., Sp. Pl., vol. ii. p. 1256. Pursh, Flor. Amer. Sept., vol. ii. p. 381. Mich., Arbr. Forest. de l'Amer. Septentr., vol. iii. p. 78, pl. 2.—POLYANDRIA POLYGYNIA, Linn.—MAGNOLIE, Juss.

The *swamp magnolia* is abundant in all marshy places from Louisiana to Connecticut, growing in groves in and around the swamps. It seldom exceeds twenty feet in height, and is more usually eight or ten. The flowers

Warbling Vireo or Greenlet

1 Male. 2 Female.

Swamp Magnolia

Audubon, John James. 1842. "The Warbling Vireo, or Greenlet, Vireo gilvus, Vieill. [Pl. 241]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 4, 149–152. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319354>.

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