

THE TRAGIC SIDE OF BIRD LIFE.

BY H. GROH, OTTAWA.

Poetry and song are full of the idealization of bird life; but even bird life has its stern realities. The following notes are gleaned from my field journal for the nesting months of May and June, and include all the nests which came under my observation during that time, in one small swamp within the city limits. Their significance, as bearing upon the small tendency toward increase of our native songsters, is sufficiently apparent without comment.

May 18. Black and White Warbler nest-building. Carrying dead grass into a hole at base of a rotten stump.

May 20. Robin's nest with eggs, in crotch of a tree in full view of public road.

May 24. Robin's nest empty.

May 25. Black and White Warbler's nest contains first egg.

May 26. Song Sparrow's nest with five eggs.

May 28. Song Sparrow's nest disturbed and eggs gone.

May 31. White-throated Sparrow's nest, containing four eggs, one of them a Cowbird's.

June 2. Nest of Wilson's Thrush containing three eggs.

June 2. Black and White Warbler's nest has now five eggs. By some accident the rotten side of the stump had got crushed down in such a way as to block the entrance to the nest, so that yesterday morning the bird was unable to enter. Cleaned it away, and find this morning that she has returned.

June 3. Nest of Wilson's Thrush torn from its place on a grassy mound, and eggs gone.

June 7. Black and White Warbler's nest found to have been torn out, and eggs missing.

June 7. The White-throated Sparrow has hatched the Cowbirds' and one of its own three eggs. The other two remain in the nest, apparently worthless. The Cowbird distinctly the larger nestling.

June 12. Cowbird in White-throated Sparrow's nest has so monopolized the attention of its foster parents, that it is now fully again as large as their rightful nestling.

June 19. White-throated Sparrow's nest deserted, but after a minute or two the parent birds appeared in the trees above the nest, and by their chirping showed signs of concern. No sign of either young bird.

This last entry completes the history of the nests discovered in this swamp, with the single exception of one belonging to a pair of crows, whose young on June 12 had so far escaped the fate of the other birds, as to be trying their powers of flight.



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