

molested. It is rarely that the nest of the goldfinch or the cedar-bird is harried.

My neighborhood on the Hudson is perhaps exceptionally unfavorable as a breeding haunt for birds, owing to the abundance of fish-crows and of red squirrels; and the season of which this chapter is mainly a chronicle, the season of 1881, seems to have been a black-letter one even for this place, for at least nine nests out of every ten that I observed during that spring and summer failed of their proper issue. From the first nest I noted, which was that of a bluebird, — built (very imprudently I thought at the time) in a squirrel-hole in a decayed apple-tree, about the last of April, and which came to naught, even the mother-bird, I suspect, perishing by a violent death, — to the last, which was that of a snow-bird, observed in August, among the Catskills, deftly concealed in a mossy bank by the side of a road that skirted a wood, where the tall thimble blackberries grew in abundance, and from which the last young one was taken, when it was about half grown, by some nocturnal walker or daylight prowler, some untoward fate seemed hovering about them. It was a season of calamities, of violent deaths, of pillage and massacre, among our feathered neighbors. For the first time I noticed that the orioles were not safe in their strong, pendent nests. Three broods were started in the apple-trees, only a few yards from the house, where, for previous seasons, the birds had nested without molestation; but this time the young were all destroyed when about half grown. Their chirping and chattering, which was so noticeable one day, suddenly ceased the next. The nests were probably plundered at night, and doubtless by the little red screech-owl, which I know is a denizen of these old