

Nature about the Farm

Last Birds of Summer—A Migratory Butterfly—Bird Notes

Edited by C. W. NASH

The last great wave of autumn migration is now passing over the Province and the woods are full of heralds, olive backed and grey checked thrushes, with flocks of various sparrows, warblers, kinglets and nuthatches, all busy searching every nook and corner for insects, or the ripened seeds of weeds which are only too abundant everywhere. It is very interesting to watch a mixed party of birds work through an orchard or shrubbery at this season, and note how the various species are each peculiarly adapted to certain methods of feeding, so that there is no part of the ground, or any form of plant life growing on it, which is not visited by one or more species of birds and carefully looked over for such food as it may supply. The thrushes move in a leisurely, dignified way over the ground, scanning it closely, nevertheless, for any sign of beetle or grub which may be hiding upon, or near the surface. The white throated, white crowned and fox sparrows are fussy, bustling, rustlers constantly scratching over the fallen leaves or scrambling about brush piles and tangled weed beds, picking up here an insect and there a seed constantly eating and chattering in sheer musical quiet way. Sometimes an ambitious young white throat will mount the top of a bush and try to sing, but his notes are not under control and do not much resemble the clear "Floor Tom Peabody, Peabody" so characteristic of spring. These two groups of birds, with perhaps a wren or two to help them, glean so closely over the ground and the low growing plants that it would seem as if nothing could escape them. In the trees the warblers are working over the branches or darting out into the air after some flying insect they have disturbed; quick as thought in their movements and apparently tireless, they are the embodiment of perpetual motion. Out on the ends of the twigs, too slender to support anything heavier than their tiny forms, are the little kinglets scrutinizing every cluster of buds for the eggs of Aphids or other insects so frequently deposited in such places. The kinglets and chickadees, which often work together, are not in the least particular as to the position they are in when feeding; there is no conceivable shape into which a bird's body may be twisted which they will not assume in their effort to see all over the twig to which they are hanging. They are certainly entitled to be considered the acrobats of the feathered tribe, though perhaps the nuthatches are entitled to share that honor with them, for they, too, seem to be quite indifferent as to which end is upwards. The nuthatches and woodpecker scramble all over the trunks and larger branches of the trees hunting for insects hidden away in the crevices of the bark, where so many pass the winter, or would do so if it were not for the birds which find and destroy them.

INSECTS—A MIGRATORY BUTTERFLY

That the great majority of our birds migrate southward in the autumn to escape the rigors of winter is now well known, the routes followed have been mapped out and the time taken by each species from point to point on its journey accurately noted, but that one of our most familiar butterflies is also a regular migrant is not so well known, nor are its movements as yet been fully studied. This butterfly is the monarch (*Danaus Archippus*) a large insect with dark orange black and white wings, around the margins of which are many white spots. In our next issue I will give an illustration of it, which is better than detailed description. These butterflies usually appear here (at Toronto) early in June, the first

arrivals being very dull colored and much worn specimens. Their travel stained and ragged appearance being accounted for by the fact that they are individuals which have made two very long journeys, the first from here, southward, in the preceding fall and another from some point south where they wintered back to us in the spring. Soon after their arrival these old specimens resort to patches of asclepias plants (milkweed), upon which they deposit their eggs, this being the only food plant of the larvae. Egg laying seems to be protracted over a considerable time, all through the season, in fact, for larvae of all sizes may be found on the milkweeds from the beginning of July until late in August, and perhaps even after in some seasons, making it difficult to ascertain whether or not there is more than one brood. I am inclined to think there are two, that is to say, I believe the first comes lay eggs from which perfect insects mature in time to enable them to reproduce before the close of the season.

The time required from the hatching of the egg to the emergence of the perfect insect from the chrysalis is about thirty days. If then, the first eggs are laid in June, there would be ample time for the production of a second brood in August. In no other way can I account for the enormous increase in the number of these insects which is so noticeable at that season, when they are congregating prior to their flight. At this time, too, they are bright, high colored and quite perfect, showing that they have not been long on the wing.

The larvae which may be found on almost any patch of milkweed in the country seem to be obnoxious to birds, for though I have taken the butterfly from the stomachs of cuckoos, I have never yet found that a caterpillar had been eaten.

British Columbia Fairs

The New Westminster Fair held during the week ending Oct. 3rd was a fairly successful one. Mr. J. M. Gardhouse, Highfield, Ont., judged the horses, sheep, and with Mr. Henry Wade, Toronto, the Shorthorn Cattle. Mr. Wade and Dr. Hopkins, of the Dominion Veterinary Department, judged the swine and dairy cattle.

The show of horses was a very good one, especially of the heavy draught classes. Mr. Alex. Galbraith, of Janesville, Wisconsin, was a large exhibitor. His sheep were also good and likewise the Shorthorn exhibit.

Mr. Gardhouse, as soon as he had finished judging, made a flying trip Eastward in order to attend the shire sale at Granton, on Oct. 10th. This he succeeded in doing and purchased a couple of the best Stallions.

Mr. Wade will spend a few days in the Pacific province before returning.

New Patent Law

The bill presented by the Honorable Sydney Fisher, Minister of Agriculture, and which received its first reading May 28th, 1903, became law on August 13th last. The new law makes the term of Canadian Patents heretofore granted, or to be granted, entirely independent of corresponding foreign patents. The condition of Canadian inventors is much improved by the new law, and it is expected that the number of patents applied for will greatly increase in the near future.

Our readers may obtain further information on the subject from Messrs Marion & Marion, Patent Attorneys, Montreal.

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