

THE ROBIN

head are black and the whole back is grayish slate. The tail is black with white spots near the tips of the outer feathers, conspicuous during flight. A white spot is situated above the eye and a whitish ring around the eye. The throat is white, striped with black. The breast and sides are rufous, the belly is white. The female is duller particularly on the back, which is lighter, and the top of the head, which is more gray than black. The breast is duller. There is no difficulty in distinguishing the sexes in the spring. The young is dull colored like the female, but has conspicuous black marks on the breast. The bluebird and the towhee have breasts colored like that of the robin.

3. ITS NOTES AND SONGS.

(a) Observations to be made by pupils.

Endeavor to find how many notes the bird has.

Distinguish its song from its call.

At what period of the day does it sing?

Can you hear it before you are up in the morning?

Describe its call to express fear or alarm, as when the young are in danger.

What other emotion does it express by its calls?

At what season of the year does it sing?

In what kind of weather does it sing most ardently?

(b) To the teacher.

It is generally impossible to describe a bird's song in words, and the attempt will not be made here. The song of the robin is quite melodious and has some variation; it can be heard just after dawn and also until late in the evening. In its call notes it has a greater vocabulary than almost any other bird. It seems to express all the emotions from the tenderest yearning and love through interrogation, suspicion to the most frantic rage and fear. The meaning of its different notes are not at all well known and careful and patient observation is required by many observers to make the speech of this attractive bird better understood. Its song is most hilarious just before rain, as if it knew that the wet would drive the worms to the surface.