

Hark ! from the leafless branches of the stately elm by the roadside comes a strain of lively flute-like melodies; it is the spring song of the Song Sparrow, the "rossignol of the French Canadians of Quebec; it may be said however that the true nightingale is not to be found in America, but his sweet song finds nearly an equal in the melodious strains of our own spring songster. The Song Sparrow is about the same size as the House Sparrow and of nearly the same gray shades; its breast is marked with brown streaks. The nest is built of grasses and the eggs are white dotted with chocolate brown.

By the end of March several other birds have returned from their wintering quarters in Southern climes; among them are the Bronzed Grackles, the Red-Winged Blackbirds the Blue Birds and the Swallows.

The Bronzed Grackle is a brownish purple bird, resembling somewhat the Crow in general appearance, but it is about half as small; the Grackles are usually seen in small flocks in Spring whilst in Autumn thousands congregate to feed on the grain in the farmer's fields. The Red Winged Blackbird resembles the preceding bird, it may however be distinguished from it, by the more purplish sheen of its plumage and the bright-red color of the base of its wings:— it is sometimes called Bird of Society because it loves to associate with his companions and in large flocks to devastate the grain-fields; the song of this bird if such it can be called is of decidedly metallic character of which the poet Emerson says:

"The black-birds make the maples ring
With social cheer and jubilee;
The red-wing flutes his o-ka-lee.

The Blue Bird, certainly the most beautiful of our spring birds, is a beautiful sky-blue creature, about the size of the American Robin. and like it his breast is of a beautiful brownish-red color.

Of the swallows there are several species at Ottawa, of which the most abundant are perhaps the Barn and the Cliff Swallows, which may be seen by the thousands circling near the surface of the river in their hunting for the mosquitoes and small flies which constitute their food. The Barn Swallow, as its name implies, nests under the rafters