

### Some Spring Arrivals of Birds.

E. C. ALLEN, Yarmouth, N. S.

The coming of the robin is to us, as the coming of the blue-bird is to the people of New England, a harbinger of spring. The bluebird, (*Siala sialis*), is decidedly uncommon here. It is not our blue jay, (*Cyanocitta cristata*), a common resident familiar to all, but is considerably smaller, being in size between a robin and English sparrow. The upper parts are of a beautiful unmixed blue, and the breast cinnamon brown. On observing a small flock which has passed through this locality the last two years, on its way south, it has been with a feeling of regret that it was not more common here. But without the bluebird we are well favored. The robin is too well known to need any description. Another bird arriving at about the same time is the rusty blackbird, (*Scolecophagus carolinus*). It is slightly smaller than the robin. The color of the male is a glossy blue-black throughout; the female black but duller. In the fall the feathers of both are tipped with rusty brown. Hence the name rusty blackbird. The only common bird which would be mistaken for the rusty blackbird is the bronzed grackle or crow blackbird; but this bird is larger than the robin, and as the rusty blackbird is smaller this should distinguish them. Besides the bronzed grackle is much less common here.

Doubtless all are familiar with the choruses heard from the tops of the trees every fine spring morning. This "tweet, tweet, tweet," running off into the warbles and whistles which constitute the short song, is uttered by the song sparrow (*Melospiza fasciata*), a bird about the size of the English sparrow, but perhaps a little slighter. There are mornings during the last of March, and through April and May, when every tree in some neighborhoods holds its songster, and the air seems full to overflowing with the music. There is another chorus at evening, and occasionally some individual more joyous if possible than his fellows, will break forth in the dead of the night. As for colour, the song sparrow is brown, streaked with black above, and light gray or white, heavily streaked with dark brown on the under parts. These dark streaks are thicker near the middle of the breast.

The chipping sparrow, (*Spizella socialis*), somewhat smaller, also has a streaky brown back, but the top of the head (in spring) is of an unmixed chestnut brown color, and the breast a pure unspotted gray. The "chippy" also has a light streak passing

just over or above the eye, which helps in its identification.

Another common sparrow, and one most easily identified is the slate-colored junco, (*Junco hyemalis*), or "graybird" as it is more often called. It is about the size of the English sparrow. The upper parts are of a solid slaty gray, the gray extending down to the middle of the breast, where it so abruptly changes into the white of the under parts as to make a distinct line across the breast. In sharp contrast to the general dark gray appearance is the light flesh-colored bill, and also the pure white outer tail feathers which are easily seen when the bird spreads its tail in flight. The song, if such it can be called, is a simple, prolonged, but sweet trill. Generally it is our more sober-feathered birds that are the most gifted songsters. The purple finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*) is one of the exceptions. The name purple finch is misapplied, as will be seen from the description. Wings and tail brownish; belly, white. All the other parts, head, breast, back, and rump, washed with rosy-red. The red is particularly bright on the head, rump and breast. The female has no red in her plumage and closely resembles the female English sparrow; but her breast is much more streaked and her tail decidedly notched; that is, the middle feathers are shorter, giving the appearance of a V-shaped cut in the end of the tail. The song of the purple finch is worth going far to hear, but it is not necessary to go outside the limits of the towns, as this bird favors ornamental trees.

In speaking of song, one is reminded of the ruby-crowned kinglet (*Regulus calendula*). In no other bird of my acquaintance are the size of the bird and the volume of the song so out of proportion. In size it is little larger than the humming bird, and in its olive green coat would rarely be noticed if it did not possess a song loud and long enough for a bird the size of a robin. It gets its name from a bright red spot in the crown of the male. It is a dweller of the woods, favoring swampy places.

---

[The following additional notes of birds seen about St. John may be of interest: The bluebird was common at Rothesay in late March. The fox-sparrow, a little larger than the song-sparrow, with tail spots on the breast and margin of wings rufous-colored, is abundant. The red polled linnet is given on the authority of Mr. J. W. Banks as arriving here in great flocks on Easter Sunday.—EDITOR.]