

Phoebe-bird (*Sayornis fuscus*) is a well known harbinger of early spring, and comes North so early in the season as to be fairly reckoned a winter bird.

Its livery is one of dull olive green above and along the sides and breast, fading slightly towards the tail; top and sides of the head, dark brown; below, dull yellowish-white mixed with brown on the chin, which latter color sometimes extends across the breast; a few dull white feathers on the eyelids; tail broad and slightly forked.

As soon as the birds have paired, usually by the first of May, they commence building. The nest is placed in a sheltered situation, most often, perhaps, under a bridge, sometimes under a ledge of rock, in a barn, or even in the interstices of an well-wall, six or eight feet down. It is constructed of fine hairs, grasses, roots, moss and like material, plastered together with pellets of mud. It is lined with soft grasses and feathers, on which are laid the delicate eggs. These are usually five in number, of a soft, creamy-white tint, sometimes sparingly covered with reddish-brown spots. Two broods are raised each season, sometimes three, always in the same nest, but the old nest is not used a second year.

As a class the Fly-catchers are the best architects we have. The King-bird (*Tyrannus carolinensis*), the most widely distributed of them all, builds a nest altogether admirable, using soft cotton and woollen substances, lichens, moss and shreds of birch bark, sparing neither time nor material to render it substantial and warm. The green-crested Pewee (*Empidonax acadicus*) sometimes builds its nest wholly of the blossoms of the hickory tree. The Wood Pewee (*Contopus virens*) always chooses a branch covered with small lichens, and saddles its nest upon its upper surface, so closely assimilated by its own external coating of lichens as

not to be distinguishable from a natural protuberance on the limb. It is cup-shaped, a perfect segment of a sphere, and rivals even the artistic nests of the humming birds. There is never a loose end or shred to hang in the wind and catch one's attention. Those nests made in the vicinity of dwellings indicate their neighborhood by a variety of miscellaneous and convenient material, bits of paper, rags, cotton, wool, poultry feathers, yarn, string, etc., but are usually, from this very heterogeneity, coarser and rougher than those farther removed from civilization, which, in this instance at least, has exerted a deteriorating influence.

The food of the Pewee, like that of all the fly catchers, consists principally of insects captured on the wing. From this probably results its well-known partiality to the vicinity of water and to the neighborhood of dwellings, as either of these localities breeds an abundance of insect food. And here, perched on some favorite spot, Phoebe will sit all the morning watching for insects, and continually repeating its simple song. There seems to be a special provision in the wise economy of Nature that these fly-catchers shall seize only those insects that are actually on the wing most of the time, passing from tree to tree or hovering among the shrubbery. They thus leave to the warblers and vireos their appropriate food in those forms of vermin that remain concealed under the foliage and twigs, and to the thrushes those which haunt the grasses and the ground. Though there is such a multiplicity of bird life there is in this way room enough for all. Nay, even more, each family has its own appropriate place, and is actually needed there, because none other can fill it.

It is a vain and mistaken hope that any species of our birds can be exter-