

NOTES ON THE WHITE-THROATED SPARROW.

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Even after fifteen years' acquaintanceship, I still look forward to the arrival of the White-throated Sparrow as a chief event in the spring migration.

Birds confine themselves chiefly to the open country at this time; in fact few wood-dwellers have begun to arrive. Hardwood groves carpeted with *Hepaticas* and other blossoms hold some attraction for bird life, but in the gloom of the evergreen swamp few notes are heard. Here, the hardy Skunk-cabbage is alone strong enough to force its way through snow and ice-water; a Winter Wren occasionally bubbles forth its overflow of spirits, and possibly at twilight you may hear the Hermit Thrush, yet it requires the frequency of the White-throat's cheery whistle to make one feel entirely at home.

Immediately on their arrival (on the average about the 27th of April) one may find these sparrows paired and settled in their breeding haunts. After the first of May it is usual to hear individuals in city gardens (in one instance a lumber yard in the heart of the city was chosen by a bird which sang nearly every morning from the 14th to the 20th of May), but these birds are more likely northern than local residents. During the three or four weeks following their arrival the White-throats sing a great deal; even at night one will often hear a sudden burst of song. Usually the same number of notes are uttered, though the variation in pitch and inflection is considerable. Later, when the breeding season is far advanced, notes are frequently omitted; often the first two alone are uttered, the second being much shortened and abruptly terminated. One feels, on hearing this late summer song, that the bird has not finished what it started to say; as if the impulsive singer were denied the right to sing yet could hardly repress the song. The abrupt full-stop suggests sadness,—oblivious for the moment, the White-throat is suddenly reminded of the dying summer. Still later, in late August and September, though individuals will sometimes sing the spring song in its entirety, it is more usual to hear the first note only and that much shortened, an utterance that would readily escape detection.

Comparatively few birds commence nesting in May, though I have found several complete sets in that month. On May 15th, '10, my earliest record, I located two partially completed nests; a week later found these nests abandoned, and two others with one and four eggs respectively. This habit of abandoning nests when disturbed, in common with such birds as the Ovenbird,