

Some Common Birds.

By J. W. BANKS.

An Industrious Fisherman.

The belted kingfisher (*Ceryle alcyon*) is closely related to the Mexican trogon found in the vicinity of the Rio Grande. The food of the kingfisher consists entirely of small fish. As soon as the lakes and streams are free of their wintry covering, the startling cry of the kingfisher is heard. Strong of wing, it is frequently seen high in the air. An industrious fisherman, whether perched on some overhanging limb or skimming rapidly over the water, he is always on the alert for his finny prey, capturing it with his large spearlike bill by a head-long plunge, depending on his strong wings to lift him again from the water. He is quite indifferent to the presence of man, neither courting or shunning his company; content to do his own fishing, in the same old way.

About the 20th of May work is commenced on a home for the young brood; the perpendicular face of an earth-bank is the site chosen. The amount of labour both male and female perform in its completion is marvelous. The entrance to this home nest is a tunnel from four to six feet in length, straight in, unless the birds meet with an obstacle when they will diverge either to the right or left. At the extremity of the tunnel a chamber is dug, oval in shape, about fifteen inches in diameter and eighteen inches high, the walls of which are quite smooth. No ray of light enters this castle of the king and queen fisher; yet it is scrupulously clean. Dry grass is sparingly used, barely enough to keep the pure white eggs from the cold ground. The usual number of eggs laid is six. The young birds remain in the home till full grown, and are quite blind till within a few days of leaving. The female may be identified by a band of bright chestnut across the lower breast, extending along the sides.

A Bird of Varied Plumage and Calls.

The flicker or golden-winged woodpecker (*Colaptes auratus*), the most brilliantly coloured of all of our woodpeckers, arrives about the 22nd of May. Differing from other members of the family, they are rarely seen in the deep woods, preferring to dwell among the dead and broken trees in pasture fields. They are shy and watchful birds and are rarely caught napping. Their food consists chiefly of ants, procured from infested trees and on the ground. This bird has a number of notes and calls, some of which are musical and

others are amusing. The flicker may be often observed perched upon a limb in the manner of other birds, as well as clinging to the upright trunk.

Their nest is excavated in the trunk of a dead tree at different altitudes. Measuring one in a dead pine, which a wood-chopper had felled not knowing of the nest, I found the entrance to be eighty feet from the ground. The labour of excavating is shared by both birds; the nest is from ten to twelve inches deep. The usual number of eggs laid is seven; the shells are intensely hard and pure white.

Some Shore Birds.

During the first two weeks in May hosts of shore birds, embracing a number of different families, pass through the Maritime Provinces on their way to their breeding grounds on the Labrador coast, and the Arctic regions. Two species, at least, of sandpipers belonging to these shore birds, are known to be summer residents of southern New Brunswick. The margins of lakes and ponds are favorite resorts, where they find an abundance of food in the form of marine insects, and in the larvae of insects found in shallow water.

The white-rumped sandpiper (*Tringa fuscicollis*) may be easily identified by the white upper tail coverts shewing a well defined white patch when the wings are extended in flight, "a strong character peculiar to this species." I have had the pleasure of examining several nests of this bird; their eggs are laid the first week in June; there is no attempt at nest building. A mere depression is made in the green moss, or a bed of dry leaves in which the creamy-brown eggs, to the number of three or four are laid. The nest is never more than fifty yards from the water's edge, and always in the shelter of the woods or dense shrubbery.

The well known spotted sandpiper (*Actitis macularia*) is readily identified by the profuse spotting of the neck and breast and its incessant tipping of the body as if balanced on reciprocating springs. This bird, differing from all his relatives, is found during the breeding season from the State of Virginia to the Labrador coast. Their nest is either a cup-shaped cavity formed in the ground in a pasture-field or meadow and lined sparingly with dry grass, or it is quite a respectable nest, built on a knoll and composed of different dry vegetable substances. The nest is small, and the four pointedly pyriform shaped eggs are invariably placed in the nest with the large end up.