

SOME NOTES ON WINTER BIRDS.

By C. W. G. EHRIG.

By our Canadian winter birds are meant certain birds of several different families, which in their coming and going show marked inexplicable anomalies or eccentricities, so to speak. To them belong primarily birds like the pine grosbeak, the Bohemian waxwing, the evening grosbeak, and secondarily birds like the hawk, snowy and Richardson's owls, the Canada jay, and to some extent the redpoll, pine siskin, snowflake and goshawk. These birds are not real migrants, *i. e.*, birds that come and go to and from their breeding places at nearly the same time each season, and in the same general direction and to the same general destination, so that their winter habitat is well known; nor are these Canadian winter birds real permanent residents at their breeding localities. They indulge in, what seems to us to be more or less of an aimless wandering about the country, most of them not going much farther south than our southern boundary, if that far, at all. What induces them to wander over the country in this way, showing up here in numbers one winter and then not coming again for several seasons? Is it the low temperature prevailing in their northern habitat? No, because other seasons, severer than the present one here, they remain in their higher latitudes. That also does away with the idea that some people have, that these birds have a certain premonition of an impending serious winter, a certain vague premonitory-barometric sense, allowing them to diagnose the weather in advance, and escape coming hardships! Is it on account of a failure in their food supply? Although this is undoubtedly a better reason than the first, it does not explain all. They indulge in such wanderings when their food supply is not short in their homes to the north. When the Canada jay came here two winters ago, and went in great numbers as far south as Toronto—a thing that had not occurred for about fifty years—their usual food supply, the kitchens of the lumber camps, the offal from the farm-houses, were there as usual. Neither can it be assumed that when the snowy owls make their phenomenal periodical incursions into southern territory in such vast numbers, that