

## THE RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH

*(Sitta canadensis).*

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By WM. H. MOORE, Scotch Lake, N. B.

Were our birds classified as are plants, according to their abilities to withstand the inclemency of our northern climate, the subject of the following sketch would rank as a hardy perennial among the avi-fauna of eastern Canada.

Although not a bird having a well-developed song as do some of our other winter birds, its voice is nevertheless well cultivated along certain lines. The ordinary notes sound like *yank* or *knkak*, and, when heard at some distance, are suggestive of loneliness. Then there are sweet twitterings uttered incessantly when the individuals of a family are foraging among tree tops. A noticeable flow of talk is poured forth as the mated birds are investigating and deciding upon a nesting site.

The search for the location of the nest apparently begins in the month of March. The yanking abilities are then taxed to a great extent, the birds being known to utter that call uninterruptedly for over a half minute. After the site is exactly decided upon, and work begun, the calling of the birds ceases to a great extent.

The nesting site is chosen in some decayed tree trunk, preferably that of a conifer, the second choice being the white or soft maple. The birds undoubtedly understand the method of decay in trees, as the above species of trees seem to decay most near the heart, and are more easily chipped out than trunks that are decayed upon the outside and sounder toward the centre. Thus, when the bark is pierced, the hardest of the mining is accomplished. Yet their work is often in vain, as they sometimes come upon knots in the wood; these they are unable to chip out, and they are obliged to choose a new site. In such instances, they evidently occupy a nest of a previous year, either one of their own species or that of a small woodpecker, as the female would be ready to lay the eggs before a new nest could be excavated. The length of time occupied in nest making is from two weeks to two months.