

**ORNITHOLOGY.**

A Paper Read by M. A. Oulton at the Teachers' Institute, Hartland, 1898

(Continued from last week.)

The classification of the bird will now depend largely on the description which the pupil returns to the teacher with. Supposing the description to be given as follows: Length 5 to 5½ inches, about one inch shorter than the English Sparrow; male ashy grey under the eye and the back of the neck, underneath and lower back. Gray stripes over the eye, and blackish brown one running through it; dark red crest as a cap for his crown; upper back brown, slightly reddish; wings and tail dusky brown; wing-bands dull; bill black. Female lacking chestnut crown; bill brown; the song a continuation of chirps, strongly resembling the song of a junco but more nearly resembling the notes of a locust. The teacher having called his class and received the above description will ask a few questions as to where the bird was seen and a few points as to his habits, so that the full class may understand the bird's distinguishing features. The point which now arises is to what family does the bird belong and what is its name? But how are these questions to be answered?

Now a small quantity of botanical knowledge will serve to tell us that when a new plant is found its classification and name depend upon its correct analysis as a standard, which by means of a key will name our plant, so in like manner a bird when thoroughly described can be named by means of correct reasoning in a standard Ornithology, which should be in the possession of each such teacher, if this can be conveniently arranged for. Now by using the description of the bird as given above the teacher will readily decide that the one mentioned belongs to the Finch family, or Fringillidae, also that he is the smallest sparrow that we in New Brunswick meet with and as his notes intimate, he is our familiar friend "Chippy."

The teacher may now allow the different members of the class to write a description of this bird with notes on his habits and song in their Natural Science notes for the day being mindful always not to omit the date, or name of the bird in these notes, which will be kept not only as science notes but as knowledge useful for future reference throughout life.

This plan of class work should be continued from week to week until the oblique rays of the noonday sun allow the insects, which form much of the food of these birds, to become dormant, when most of our songsters return with the receding sun to the far south thus leaving the bounds of our field of study.

Now as the autumn winds take the place of the gentle zephyrs of summer and appear to be mourning the loss of our feathered friends among the falling leaves, the teacher may ask each pupil to make a synopsis of his bird lessons throughout the spring, summer and autumn; and in a general review emphasize the importance of each pupil being able to detect the common songsters of the province by (a) note, (b) sight, or (c) even by mode of flight in some cases.

The teacher who thus pursues a course of "bird-study" will not only be teaching his pupils many useful lessons, but he will also be adding to his own store of knowledge, as well as awaking that interest in his pupils which will drive away many dreary feeling and dark clouds common to school life; and instead place them in a fit condition for to receive many useful lessons direct from the hand of Nature. Yea, I believe that even the birds will learn to appreciate the close inspection of the pupils and teacher, without sitting in dread of the shower of mud, stones and sticks which greeted their advent and bade them farewell, on their departure in former years.

Returning once more to our bird class there are many points which when connected with our study will afford pleasure to both teacher and pupils, such as searching for and finding the nest of each bird described in our list. This will not only be a pleasure

but also a source of many moral lessons shown in the parental affection of the mother and father birds in caring for their tender fledglings and in building a nest where dangers are least liable. Also the fact that each bird, such as a Savanna Sparrow, will build a nest just the same as any other Savanna Sparrow, also that no two classes of birds will build just the same style of a nest.

**MIGRATION OF BIRDS.**

Again another excellent lesson may be gained by watching the birds as they return to and leave us, and when this time is appointed for each. Also some birds spend the winter with us and the summer in the groves and fields of Labrador, among which may be mentioned the Tree Sparrow, the Snow Bunting, etc., while others such as the far famed Old Tom Peabody. Vesper Sparrow; and still a third class such as the Canada Jay, the Blue Jay and the black capped Chickadee, remain with us throughout the year, these being called permanent residents. Thus Nature has provided us with birds for the entire year although they extend from the Iceland lake to the orange groves of Florida.

**GROUPING OF BIRDS.**

An excellent method for remembering the birds in their families or according to color—still the former is the preferable method—is to compare the different species of each family or sub-family.

**FOOD OF BIRDS.**

Another subject with which the teacher must treat is the food of birds, as it is only when our pupils learn that many birds which are found among our fruit trees are not looking for fruit as food, but insects which do much harm by gnawing the fruit, that they will allow the birds to rest in peace.

Lastly the result of bird-study must be the fitting of our pupils to read intelligently those poems, sonnets and various prosaic articles with which they are brought in contact which are literally filled with references to our various "feathered neighbors" and to their good qualities as well as habits. In fact without our birds where would the poet get his substitute for such a poem as "The Sky-Lark," "The Cuckoo" or "The Sparrow," etc.?

But this study can not do other than elevate the moral standard of our pupils and create a taste for deeper study into the laws of Nature. The rough barbaric notion of appearing at school with a partridge feather or a sparrow's wing attached to the side of the hat will fade from the minds of our female pupils, while our boys will learn to shun the room with a dressed Blue Heron, Loon or Goose standing as an ornament of the same, just as much as if it were an embalmed brother, cousin or sister posted up as an ornament of the room.

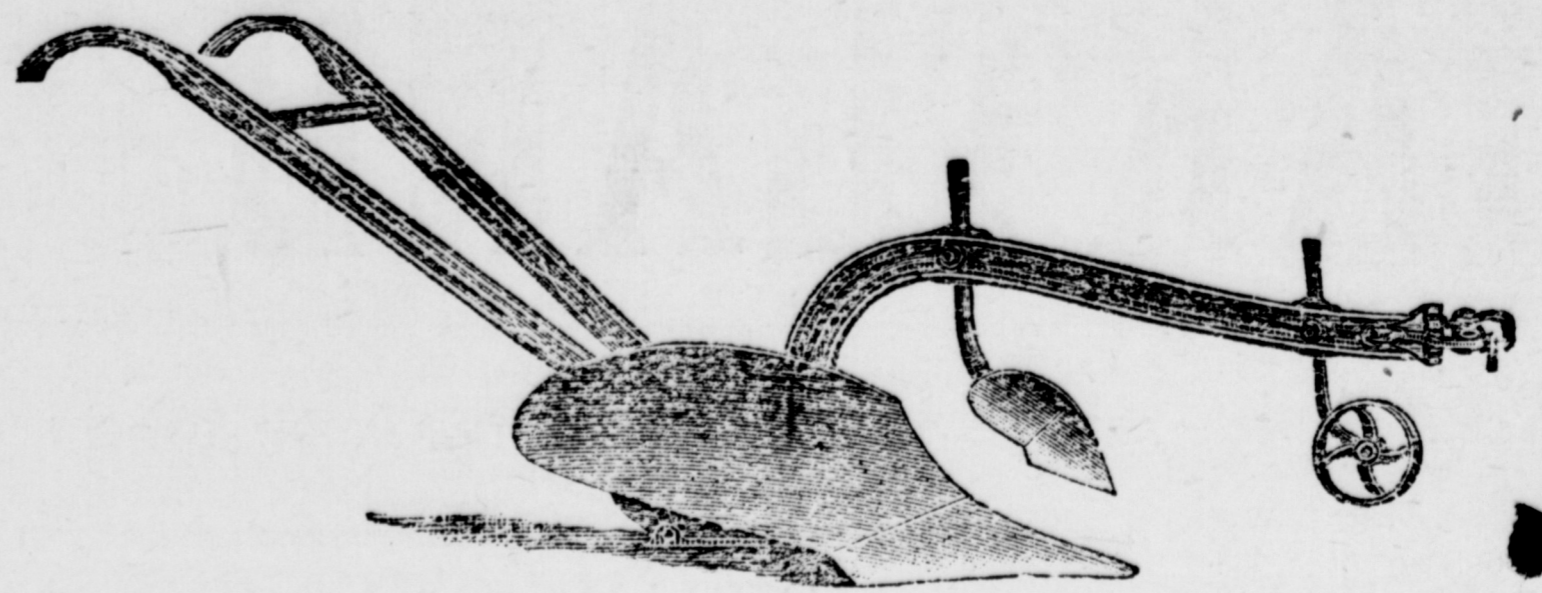
**THE CONCLUSION.**

Therefore, fellow teachers, seeing the vast importance of bird-study in our schools, let us not prepare to greet our summer birds as thieves, and our winter birds as omens of evil, but let us rather lay aside the shot gun and with pencil and brain welcome our friends from Greenland, Florida, Europe, Africa, South America, etc., as messengers of love and happiness. Let us join hands in greeting our soul inspiring, yet melodious songsters, even though they be draped in feathers.

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