

Mr. Chappe has
illustrated copy
for St. Nicholas

Warbler Ways

-- I --

(Black-Throated Gray Warbler)

Plate 1a

Copy

① During the warm days of June when the mystery of life seems suddenly unveiled in a miraculous manner, I often frequent a woody retreat above the old mill-dam on Fulton creek. The water gurgles among the gray rocks and glides past a clump of firs and maples. Star flowers gleam from the darker places of shade, white anemones are scattered in the green of the grass blades

and ferns and Linnaean bells overhang the moss-covered logs.

② As one sits here in the midst of the woods, ~~he fairly feels his animal instinct, dulled by long disuse, spring upward into action.~~ The chords of every sense are stretched. * His eye catches the cautious movements of furry and feathered creatures. His nostrils sniff the aroma of the fir boughs tipped with their new growth of lighter green. His heart vibrates with the rhythmic throbbing of the forest pulse.

N May ③ One day as I ^{lay} ~~sat~~ idling in this favorite haunt, a shadow caught in the net of sunbeams spread under the maple.

Slide
with
lenses

A black-throated gray warbler fidgeted on the limb above with a straw in her bill. This was pleasing. I had searched the locality for years, trying to find the home of this shy bird, and here was a conclusive piece of evidence thrust squarely in my face.

(4) The site of the nest was twelve feet from the ground in the top of a sapling. A week and a half later, I parted the branches and found a cup of grasses, feather-lined, nestled in the fork of the fir. There lay four eggs of a pinkish tinge,

Slide 2
nest of 4 eggs (2)

white anemones

touched with dots of brown.

(5) The chief source of satisfaction, in a camera study of bird life, comes not in the odd-time chances of observation, but in a continued period of leisure, when one may spend his entire time about bird homes just as he takes a week's vacation at the sea-shore. One cannot take a camera, no matter how expensive //

it is, and snap off good bird pictures during the spare moments of a busy day. He might, however, fill half a dozen note-books with valuable odd-time observations. To be sure, the joy of nature comes to the amateur, not to the professional, but to be a successful amateur bird photographer one has fairly to make a business of lying in wait for his subjects hour after hour, day by day, and maybe week after week. ~~The reward of real success~~ comes not in mere acquaintanceship with some feathered bit of flying life, but in real friendship; there cannot be the formality of a society call, but one should by frequent visits be well enough acquainted to drop in any time with his camera

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~~without interfering with the daily affairs of family life.~~

(6)⁴ The real value of photography is that it records the truth. The person, who photographs birds successfully, has to study his subjects long and carefully. He is not likely, therefore, to get only a scanty set of notes and be compelled to complete his observations when he is seated in the comfortable chair of his study. (~~For this reason, a camera in the hands of~~

nest & 2 young - nest

~~some of the recent nature writers would be of great value to science, if they could picture some of the humanized habits of creatures they have described with the pen.)~~ Of course, in the study of ⁵Art, we may try to improve on Nature, but in Nature

Study truth is the important element. We might as well understand that a beast or bird is interesting because of its own wild individuality, not because it is a man dressed in fur or feathers.

Wether

⑦ Of course, it showed a pure lack of discretion to try to picture the home of such a shy warbler during the days of incubation, but I half believe the feathered owners would have overlooked this, had it not been for the pair of blue jays that buccaneered that patch of fir. While we were getting a picture, I saw them eyeing us curiously, but they slunk away among the dark firs squawking jay-talk about something, I didn't understand. Two days ^{later} we skirted the clump to see if the sense of warbler propriety had been too severely shocked by the camera. In an instant, I translated every syllable of what that pair of

blue pirates had squawked. The scattered remnants of the nest and the broken bits of shell told all.

(8) These gray warblers, however much they were upset by the camera-fiend, ^{and} blue-jay depredations, were not to be thwarted. They actually ⁷went to house keeping again within forty yards of the old home site. The new nest was placed in a fir sapling very like the first, but better hidden from marauding blue jays. It was supremely better located from the photographer's point of view. Just at the side of the new site was the sawed-off stump of an old fir upon which ^{me} I climbed and aimed the camera straight into the nest. There instead of four, were only two small nestlings. They stretched their skinny necks and opened wide their yellow-lined mouths in an attitude of unmistakable hunger.

Photo (3)

(9) The moment ⁸the mother returned and found ~~me~~ ^{me} so dangerously near her brood, she was scared almost out of her senses. She fell from the top of the tree in a fluttering fit. She caught quivering on the limb a foot from my hand. Involuntarily, I reached to help her. Poor thing! She couldn't hold on, but slipped through the branches and clutched my shoe. I never saw such an exaggerated case of the chills, or heard such a pitiful high-pitched note of pain. I stooped to see what ailed her. What! both wings broken, and unable to hold with her ⁹claws! She ~~fell~~ ^{fall}wavered like an autumn leaf to the ground. I leaped down, but she had limped under a bush and suddenly got well. Of course, I knew she was tricking me.

(10) The next day my heart was hardened against all her alluring wiles and crocodile tears. She played her best, but the minute she failed to win, I got a furious berating. It was no begging note now. She perched over my head and called me every name in the warbler vocabulary. Then she saw ^{that we} ~~was~~ actually shoving that cyclopian monster right at her children. "Fly! Fly! ¹⁰ for your lives," she screamed in desperation. Both the scanty-feathered, bob-tailed youngsters jumped blindly out of the nest into the bushes below. She mother outdid all previous performances. She simply doubled and twisted in agonized death spasms. But, not to be fooled, I kept an eye on one nestling and soon replaced him in the nest where he belonged.

2 years

Nature always hides such creatures ~~from me~~ by the simple wave of her wand. I've seen a flock of half a dozen grouse flutter up into a fir and disappear to my eyes as mysteriously as fog in the sunshine.

(11) This fidgety bit of featherhood is called the Black-throated Gray Warbler, but it's only the male that has a black throat. He is not the whole species. His wife wears a white cravat and she, to my thinking, is a deal more important in warbler affairs. Mr. Warbler seemed unavoidably detained away from home on matters of business or social importance ^{the greater part} most of the day when the children were crying for food.

(12) The first day I really met the gentleman face to face ^{we were} I was trying to get a photograph of the mother as she came home

to feed. She had gotten quite used to the camera. ^{we} I had it leveled point-blank at the nest, only a yard distant. A gray

figure came flitting over the tree-top and planted himself on the limb right beside his home. He carried a green cut-worm in his mouth. No sooner had he squatted on his accustomed perch, than he caught sight of the cyclops, ^{camera} With an astonished chirp, he dropped his worm, turned a back somersault, and all I saw was a meteor streak of gray curving up over the pointed firs. I doubt if he lit or felt any degree of safety till he reached the opposite bank of the ^{river} Willamette.

^{we} I met his lordship again the following day. The

mother was doing her best to lure ~~me~~ ^{me} from the nest by her de-
ceiving antics. Every visit ~~I~~ ^{we} had made she kept practicing the
same old trick. Just as she was putting on a few extra agoniz-
ing touches, I suddenly saw a glint of gray. The father ~~leapt~~
~~dashed at the feigning mother.~~ ^{leapt} ~~and I saw~~
~~pounced upon the feigning mother.~~ I never ~~witnessed~~ ^{saw} such a
case of wife beating. Maybe it was justifiable. I'm not an
expert on bird ethics, but I know I'd never stand idly by and
see such a scandalous performance among my own neighbors. I
don't know whether the pater familias blamed his spouse for my
presence and interference, or whether he wanted all her time

and attention devoted to the care of the children. She didn't practice deceit after that.

(144) I could not tell one nestling from the other. As I

sat watching the mother, the questions often arose in my mind: Does she recognize one child from the other? Does she feed them in turn, or does she poke the food down the first open mouth she sees? Here is a good chance to experiment, I thought. So with a good ¹⁵ supply of 5 x 7 plates ^{we} watched and photographed from early in the morning till late in the afternoon for three days. At the end of that time, ^{we} I had eight pictures, or rather four pairs, each of which was taken in ^{the same} order as the

mother fed her young.

(15) The warblers foraged the firs for insects of all sizes and colors. The mother often brought in green cat-worms, these she rolled through her bill as a house-wife runs washing through a wringer, perhaps to kill the creature, or to be sure it was soft and billsome. This looked like wasted energy to me. The digestive organs of those bob-tailed bantlings seemed

equal to
~~capable of assailing~~ almost any insect I had ever seen.

(16) In the days I spent about the nest, I never saw the time when both the bairns were not in a starving mood, regardless of the amount of dinner they had just swallowed. The

flutter of wings touched the button that seemed automatically to open their mouths. At the slightest sound, I've often seen

disputes arise while the mother was away. "I'll take the next" said one. "I guess you'll not," screamed the other. The mother paid no more ¹⁷ attention to their quarrels and entreaties than to the ceaseless gurgle of the water. How could she? I don't believe she ever caught sight of her children, when their mouths were not open. The fact, that the mother fed them impartially, appealed in no way to their sense of justice. The one that got the meal quivered his wings in ex^cstasy, while the other always protested at the top of his voice.

17 The first pair of pictures in the series was taken while the young were still in the nest. The mother fed the nearest nestling. Changing the plate and adjusting the camera again, I had to wait only three minutes. The bairn at the edge of the nest surely had the advantage of position, but what was position? For all his begging, the nearest got a knock on the

18 ear that sent him bawling while his brother gulped down a fat spider.

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19 Soon after one of the bantlings hopped out on the limb, and the gray mother rewarded him with a mouthful that fairly made his eyes bulge. On her return, she did not forget

1914 -- I4 --

The first pair of pictures was taken while the young were still in the nest.

26 ^{more timid} the hungry fledgling still in the nest.

(19) Again, I tried the same experiment of having the moth-¹⁹

30 er light between her clamoring children. First, the right re-
ceived a toothsome morsel, notwithstanding the impatient ex-
clamations of the chick on the left. Soon after, the hungry
36 bairn on the left got a juicy bite, in spite of the vociferous
appeals from the right.

20 "This way I'll surely baffle the ingenuity of the
mother," I thought, as I perched both bantlings on a small limb
where they could be fed only from the right. This looked good
to the first ~~little~~ chick, for he seemed to reason that when he

opened his mouth wide, his mother could not resist his plead-^{ings}. He reasoned rightly, the first time. On the second appearance of his mother, position did not count for much, it was his brother's turn.

(21) Later in the day, I watched the gray warbler coax her two children from the fir into the thick protecting bushes below. With the keen sense of bird motherhood, she led them on and they followed out into the world of bird experience.

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