

BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER.

During the warm days of June I often frequent a woody retreat above the old mill-dam, (on Fulton Creek.) The water gurgles among the grey rocks and glides past a clump of maples. Along the banks white anemones are scattered in the green of the grass blades and ferns and Linnaean Bells over-hang the moss-covered logs.

One day, as I sat idling in this favorite haunt, a shadow caught in the net of sunbeams spread under the maple. A black-throated grey 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.

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, touched with dots of brown.

Just at the side of the nest tree was the sawed-off stump of an old fir, upon which we climbed and aimed the camera straight into the nest. ^{THE NEXT TIME WE VISITED THE PLACE WE FOUND} ~~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.

The moment the mother returned and found me so dangerously near her brood, she was scared almost out of her senses. She tried her best to fool me. 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 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 claws? She wavered like an autumn leaf to the ground. I leaped down, but she had limped under a bush and suddenly got well.

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 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 childrn, 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 ecstasy, while the other always protested at the top of his voice.

I could not tell one nestling from the other. As I sat watching the mother, the questions often arose in my mind:

Does she recognise 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 supply of 5 x 7 plates, I watched and photographed from early in the morning till late in the afternoon for three days. At the end of that time, I had eight pictures, or rather four pair of pictures, each of which was taken in order as the mother fed her bantlings.

7 * 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 posi-
8 * tion? For all his begging, the nearest got a knock on the ear that sent him bawling, while his brother gulped down a fat spider.

9 * Soon after, one of the bantlings hopped out on the limb, and the grey mother rewarded him with a mouthful that fairly made his eyes bulge. On her return, she did not forget the hungry fledgling still in the nest.

10 * This ridgety bit of featherhood is called the Black-throated Grey 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, for she took entire charge of the household.

11 * Again, I tried the same experiment of having the mother

12 *
light between her clamoring children. First, the right received a toothsome morsel, notwithstanding the impatient exclamation of the chick on the left. Soon after, the hungry bairn on the left got a juicy bite, in spite of the vociferous appeal from the right.

The mother foraged the firs for insects of all sizes and colors. She often brought in green cut-worms, which 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 bill-some. This looked like wasted energy to me. The digestive organs of those bobb-tailed youngsters seemed capable of assailing almost any insect I had ever seen.

13 *
"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 chick, for he seemed to reason that when he opened his mouth wide, his mother could not resist his pleadings. He reasoned rightly, the first time. On the second appearance of his mother, position did not count for much, it was his brothers turn.

14 *
Later in the day, I watched the grey warbler coax her two children from the fir into the thick protecting bushes below. With a keen sense of bird motherhood, she led them on and they followed out into the world of bird experience.