COMMON BIRDS: FIRST SERIES TO ACCOMPANY AUDUBON BIRD CHART NUMBER ONE

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MASSACHUSETTS AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Trieste

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FIRST SERIES

TO ACCOMPANY

AUDUBON BIRD CHART No. 1

BOSTON, MASS.

MASSACHUSETTS AUDUBON SOCIETY

PREFACE

This pamphlet is issued by the Massachusetts Audubon Society for the Protection of Birds, to accompany its Wall Chart No. 1 of colored drawings of twenty-six common birds. The objects of the Society are to discourage the wearing of feathers, except those of the ostrich and domesticated fowls, to promote the knowledge of birds in the community, and to protect all wild birds and their eggs from needless destruction. The Society circulates good literature on the subject, and accurate illustrations of birds. It seeks new members. A new member is added strength for necessary work, and is one more person interested in protecting wild birds. The chart should be hung in a conspicuous place on the wall, so that the birds, by inviting constant examination, will become familiar. It should be used to supplement nature work and general reading whenever convenient.

The Society is indebted to Mr. Ralph Hoffmann for the descriptions of the birds found in this pamphlet, and for his valuable assistance in supervising the preparation of the chart. The illustrations on the chart were especially drawn for the Society by Mr. E. Knobel. The number following the common name of the bird is the number of that bird on the chart.

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DRYOBATES PUBESCENS MEDIANUS

This little Woodpecker is the commonest of his family, if we except the Flicker, whose habits have become in many ways abnormal. The Downy spends its life on the trunks and large limbs of trees, going up or down, clinging to the upper or under surface of a limb with equal ease, always keeping its head, however, toward the upper end of the branch or tree. Its long barbed tongue enables it to transfix and pull out the grubs whose hiding-places its bill has laid open. The bill is also used to sound its call in spring, beating a sonorous tattoo on some dry, resonant limb. In May, when the bird has paired, a round opening is cut into a dead limb and a nesting-place hollowed out within. Here on the chips are laid four or five pure white eggs. The Downy spends the winter in New England, often associated at this season with the Chickadees, Kinglets, and Nuthatches on their tour of inspection through woodland and village. It may be attracted to the vicinity of a house by a bone hung to a limb; from this it will pick the last vestige of meat or gristle. The male may be distinguished from the female by the scarlet patch on the nape. The love call is the tattoo above described; the bird has also a short laugh and sharp *chick*.

Northern Flicker. 19

COLAPTES AURATUS LUTEUS

The handsome Golden-winged Woodpecker, or Flicker, is the largest of our common Woodpeckers, but unlike the rest of its family it feeds to a considerable extent on the ground.

Its bill, too, is not as blunt and powerful as those of the other Woodpeckers. The Flicker can, however, cut out a cavity in a fairly hard piece of wood, and its nesting-habits are similar to those of the Downy Woodpecker. The same cavity is often used year after year, and in it six or more pure white eggs are laid in May. The young are fed by regurgitation, the adult thrusting its bill into the mouth of the young and pumping up the food in a liquid form. The cries of the young at this time are remarkably like the hissing of snakes. Two broods are often raised, so that the loud mating call, *wick-wick-wick*, which is so characteristic of March and April, is heard again in July. Beside this call, the Flicker drums on a limb or any resonant substance, and birds when together utter a soft *yucka, yucka*, The ordinary call of the bird is a sharp *ti-ou*. A few Flickers winter in southern New England, especially near the coast. At this season they live on berries, being often seen on the poison-ivy vines. In the summer and fall their chief food consists of ants, which they find on the ground, spearing them one after another with their long, sticky tongues. They eat, also, other insects which they find on the ground or in trees. Their flight is very characteristic: a stroke of the powerful wings gives the bird an upward motion; he then falls, rising again after another stroke. When the bird is seen near by, the golden shafts under the wings are very noticeable, and when the bird flies away from the observer, the large white spot at the junction of the tail and body is a characteristic mark.

Chimney Swift. 1

CHÆTURA PELAGICA

This curious bird, resembling the Swallows in so many ways, differs essentially from them in structure and is classed by naturalists in another family. Before the construction of chimneys the Swift built in hollow trees; in remote parts of the country some still retain this habit. The nest is built of dead