

Focus: Upper NY

sudden stroke of the cat's paw. The only the shrike is a rare visitant, and is not holds their nest. They cry "Thief, thief!" to

ow surely the birds know their case I know of in which our small birds fail found in this part of the country during enemies! See how the wrens and to recognize their enemy is furnished by the nesting season of our songsters. robins and bluebirds pursue and scold the the shrike; apparently the little birds do But the birds have nearly all found cat, while they take little or no notice of not know that this modest-colored bird is out the trick the jay, and when he comes the dog! Even the swallow will fight the an assassin. At least, I have never seen sneaking through the trees in May and cat, and, relying too confidently upon its them scold or molest him, or utter any June in quest of eggs, he is quickly exposed powers of flight, sometimes swoops down outcries at his presence, as they usually and roundly abused. It is amusing to see so near to its enemy that it is caught by a do at birds of prey. Probably it is because the robins hustle him out of the tree which

little.

The life of birds is

beset with dangers and mishaps of which we know

> as if some thrush or warbler, whose nest had suffered at the hands of the jays, had the top of their voices as they charge upon watched its opportunity, and had in this him, and the jay retorts in a voice scarcely way retaliated upon its enemies. An egg less complimentary as he makes off. for an egg. The jays were lingering near,

intention of destroying them, for no part

of the contents of the eggs had been

removed. It looked like a case of revenge;

and need to keep an eye on their own to join a crusade against nest-robbers. eggs. It would be interesting to know if 
The great bugaboo of the birds is jays ever rob jays, or crows plunder crows; the owl. The owl snatches them from off or is there honor among thieves even their roosts at night, and gobbles up their in the feathered tribes? One season I eggs and young in their nests. He is a found a jay's nest in a small cedar on the veritable ogre to them, and his presence side of a wooded ridge. It held five eggs, fills them with consternation and alarm. every one of which had been punctured. One season, to protect my early

Apparently some bird had driven its sharp cherries I placed a large stuffed owl beak through their shells, with the sole amid the branches of the tree. Such a

The jays have their enemies also, very demure and silent, and probably ready racket as there instantly began about my horrified looks the birds alighted upon from birds of prey, except perhaps the The bird, though uninjured, was completely

grounds is not pleasant to think upon! the branches, and between their screams owl. The owl, I suspect, thrusts its leg into crippled, and could not fly a stroke. Its little The orioles and robins fairly "shrieked out would snatch off a cherry, as if the act the cavities of woodpeckers and into the body was hot and panting in my hands, as their affright." The news instantly spread was some relief to their outraged feelings. pocket-like nest of the oriole, and clutches I carefully broke the fetter. Then it darted

in every direction, and apparently every The chirp and chatter of the young of and brings forth the birds in its talons. In swiftly away with a happy cry. A record bird in town came to see that owl in the birds which build in concealed or inclosed one case which I heard of, a screech-owl of all the accidents and tragedies of bird cherry-tree, and every bird took a cherry, places, like the woodpeckers, the house had thrust its claw into a cavity in a tree, life for a single season would show many so that I lost more fruit than if I had left wren, the high-hole, the oriole, is in marked and grasped the head of a red-headed curious incidents. A friend of mine opened the owl in-doors. With craning necks and contrast to the silence of the fledglings of woodpecker; being apparently unable to his box-stove one fall to kindle a fire in it,

woodpeckers, and orioles are very noisy. to the feathers of its rump, by what The latter, in its deep pouch, is quite safe appeared to be the silk of some caterpillar.

most birds that build open and exposed draw its prey forth, it had thrust its own

nests. The young of the sparrows,--unless round head into the hole, and in some

the social sparrow be an exception,-- way became fixed there, and had thus

warblers, fly-catchers, thrushes, never died with the woodpecker in its talons.

allow a sound to escape them; and on The life of birds is beset with dangers

the alarm note of their parents being and mishaps of which we know little. One

heard, sit especially close and motionless, day, in my walk, I came upon a goldfinch

while the young of chimney swallows, with the tip of one wing securely fastened

desiccated forms of two bluebirds. The birds had probably taken refuge in the would offer food to the eggs,

chimney during some cold spring storm, and chatter and twitter, trying, as it but they often thus expose themselves and had come down the pipe to the stove, seemed, to encourage them to eat! The to a plague of the most deadly character. from whence they were unable to ascend. incident is hardly tragic, neither is it comic. I refer to the vermin with which their A peculiarly touching little incident of bird Certain birds nest in the vicinity of our hou-nests often swarm, and which kill the life occurred to a caged female canary. ses and outbuildings, or even in and upon young before they are fledged. In a state Though unmated, it laid some eggs, and them, for protection from their enemies, of nature this probably never happens;

To what extent the cat-bird is a

nest-robber I have no evidence,

but that feline mew of hers, and

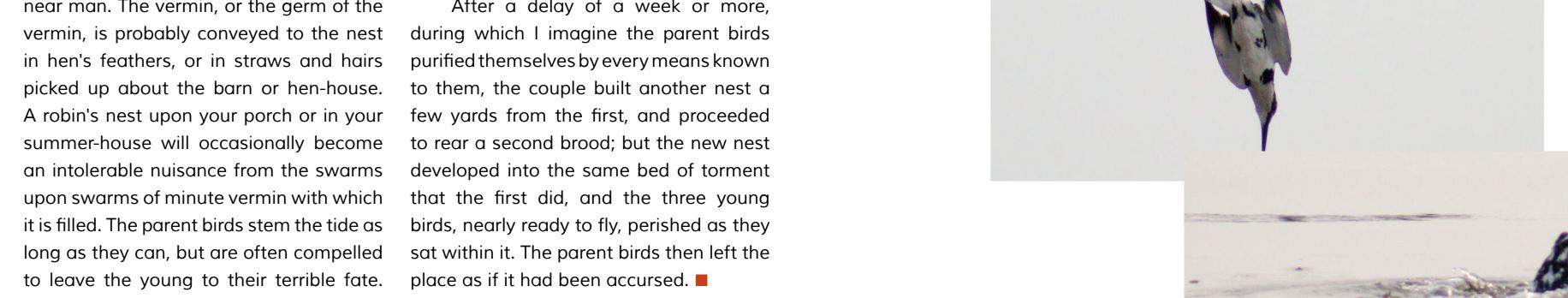
d that flirting, flexible tail, suggest

falling upon the birds which come too leaped forth and fell dead upon the ground.

near man. The vermin, or the germ of the After a delay of a week or more, vermin, is probably conveyed to the nest during which I imagine the parent birds in hen's feathers, or in straws and hairs purified themselves by every means known picked up about the barn or hen-house. to them, the couple built another nest a A robin's nest upon your porch or in your few yards from the first, and proceeded summer-house will occasionally become to rear a second brood; but the new nest an intolerable nuisance from the swarms developed into the same bed of torment upon swarms of minute vermin with which that the first did, and the three young it is filled. The parent birds stem the tide as birds, nearly ready to fly, perished as they long as they can, but are often compelled sat within it. The parent birds then left the

at least I have never seen or heard of it suddenly became a bit of purgatory. The happening to nests placed in trees or birds kept their places in their burning bed under rocks. It is the curse of civilization till they could hold no longer, when they





One season a phoebe-bird built on a

projecting stone under the eaves of the

house, and all appeared to go well till the

young were nearly fledged, when the nest





ow surely the birds know their enemies! See them scold or molest him, or utter any outcries how the wrens and robins and bluebirds at his presence, as they usually do at birds of pursue and scold the cat, while they take little prey. Probably it is because the shrike is a rare or no notice of the dog! Even the swallow will visitant, and is not found in this part of the country fight the cat, and, relying too confidently upon during the nesting season of our songsters. its powers of flight, sometimes swoops down so

But the birds have nearly all found out near to its enemy that it is caught by a sudden the trick the jay, and when he comes sneaking stroke of the cat's paw. The only case I know of through the trees in May and June in quest of in which our small birds fail to recognize their eggs, he is quickly exposed and roundly abused. enemy is furnished by the shrike; apparently the It is amusing to see the robins hustle him out

little birds do not know that this modest-colored of the tree which holds their nest. They cry bird is an assassin. At least, I have never seen "Thief, thief!" to the top of their voices as they

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charge upon him, and the jay retorts in a voice placed a large stuffed owl amid the branches of

The jays have their enemies also, and need about my grounds is not pleasant to think to keep an eye on their own eggs. It would be upon! The orioles and robins fairly "shrieked interesting to know if jays ever rob jays, or crows out their affright." The news instantly spread plunder crows; or is there honor among thieves in every direction, and apparently every bird in even in the feathered tribes? One season I found town came to see that owl in the cherry-tree, a jay's nest in a small cedar on the side of a and every bird took a cherry, so that I lost more woodedridge. It held five eggs, every one of which fruit than if I had left the owl in-doors. With had been punctured. Apparently some bird had craning necks and horrified looks the birds driven its sharp beak through their shells, with alighted upon the branches, and between their the sole intention of destroying them, for no part screams would snatch off a cherry, as if the of the contents of the eggs had been removed. It act was some relief to their outraged feelings. or warbler, whose nest had suffered at the which build in concealed or inclosed places, like hands of the jays, had watched its opportunity, the woodpeckers, the house wren, the high-hole, and had in this way retaliated upon its enemies. the oriole, is in marked contrast to the silence

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One season, to protect my early cherries I

The great bugaboo of the birds is the owl. The owl snatches them from off their roosts at night, and gobbles up their eggs and young in their nests. He is a veritable ogre to them, and his presence fills them with consternation and alarm.

scarcely less complimentary as he makes off. the tree. Such a racket as there instantly began

An egg for an egg. The jays were lingering of the fledglings of most birds that build open

-unless the social sparrow be an exception,-- owl had thrust its claw into a cavity in a tree, and caged female canary. Though unmated, it laid warblers, fly-catchers, thrushes, never allow a grasped the head of a red-headed woodpecker; some eggs, and the happy bird was so carried sound to escape them; and on the alarm note being apparently unable to draw its prey forth, away by her feelings that she would offer food of their parents being heard, sit especially close—it had thrust its own round head into the hole,—to the eggs, and chatter and twitter, trying, and motionless, while the young of chimney and in some way became fixed there, and had as it seemed, to encourage them to eat! The swallows, woodpeckers, and orioles are very thus died with the woodpecker in its talons. incident is hardly tragic, neither is it comic. noisy. The latter, in its deep pouch, is quite safe The life of birds is beset with dangers and Certain birds nest in the vicinity of our hou-

from birds of prey, except perhaps the owl. The mishaps of which we know little. One day, in ses and outbuildings, or even in and upon owl, I suspect, thrusts its leg into the cavities of my walk, I came upon a goldfinch with the tip them, for protection from their enemies, woodpeckers and into the pocket-like nest of the of one wing securely fastened to the feathers but they often thus expose themselves oriole, and clutches and brings forth the birds in of its rump, by what appeared to be the silk of to a plague of the most deadly character.

of all the accidents and tragedies of bird life for a single season would show many curious incidents. A friend of mine opened his box-stove one fall to kindle a fire in it, when he beheld in the black interior the desiccated forms of two bluebirds. The birds had probably taken refuge in the chimney during some cold spring storm, and had come down the pipe to the stove, from whence they were unable to ascend. A peculiarly and exposed nests. The young of the sparrows,- its talons. In one case which I heard of, a screech- touching little incident of bird life occurred to a

some caterpillar. The bird, though uninjured

was completely crippled, and could not fly a

stroke. Its little body was hot and panting in

my hands, as I carefully broke the fetter. Then it

darted swiftly away with a happy cry. A record

To what extent the cat-bird is a nest-robber I have no evidence, but that feline mew of hers, and that flirting, flexible tail, suggest I refer to the vermin with which their nests

before they are fledged. In a state of nature this probably never happens; at least occasionally become an intolerable nuisance

I have never seen or heard of it happening to from the swarms upon swarms of minute nests placed in trees or under rocks. It is the vermin with which it is filled. The parent birds curse of civilization falling upon the birds which stem the tide as long as they can, but are often come too near man. The vermin, or the germ compelled to leave the young to their terrible fate. of the vermin, is probably conveyed to the nest One season a phoebe-bird built on a projecting in hen's feathers, or in straws and hairs picked stone under the eaves of the house, and all up about the barn or hen-house. A robin's nest appeared to go well till the young were nearly upon your porch or in your summer-house will fledged, when the nest suddenly became a bit of purgatory. The birds kept their places in their burning bed till they could hold no longer, when they leaped forth and fell dead upon the ground.

After a delay of a week or more, during which I imagine the parent birds purified themselves by every means known to them, the couple built another nest a few yards from the first, and proceeded to rear a second brood; but the new nest developed into the same bed of torment that the first did, and the three young birds, nearly ready to fly, perished as they sat within it. The parent birds then left the place as if it had been accursed.

