

The call is a long, wavering cry, lower in pitch than the songs of our song-birds, but distinctly higher than most of the calls of the larger owls. The wavering seems to be produced by changes in intensity or loudness, and not by any wavering in pitch. The pitch of the call gradually

THE SWALLOWS

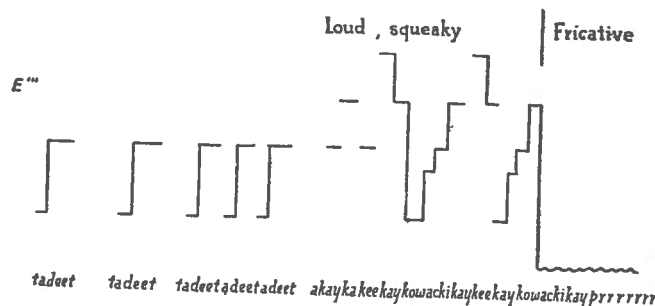


FIG. 52. SONG OF THE BARN SWALLOW

Short call notes of this bird vary also, and may be written "eet," "wit," and "tadee." The alarm note, uttered when a cat appears or when the birds in company chase a hawk, is a loud, somewhat harsh two-note phrase, "eeteet."

THE CLIFF SWALLOW

Petrochelidon albifrons

The Cliff Swallow is about the same size as other swallows, but has not the deeply forked tail of the Barn Swallow; in fact, the tail is square across the end when spread, though slightly forked in appearance when folded. The upper parts are mainly dark steel blue, but the lower back is a peculiar salmon buff. There is a gray collar about the neck, and a white forehead. The throat is rich reddish brown, and the under parts pale brown shading to white.

This bird occurs locally in summer throughout northeastern United States. It is usually common wherever it is found, but is entirely missing in many regions except in migrations, and then generally rare. The migrations occur in early May and late August or September. The bird inhabits open country, in eastern United States nesting mainly under the eaves of barns and other buildings.

The song of this bird is something like that of the Barn Swallow, but of a curious quality which is best described as

THE PURPLE MARTIN

a husky squeak. The song is quite varied in form in different individuals, and is usually shorter in time and number of notes than the Barn Swallow's song. It contains k-like consonant sounds.

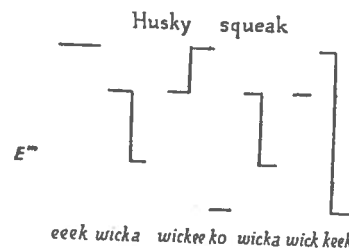


FIG. 53. SONG OF THE CLIFF SWALLOW

Call notes are also of husky quality, and sound like "wee," "wit," or "witwit." The alarm note is loud, emphatic, and slurred downward, "eeyoh."

THE PURPLE MARTIN

Progne subis

This is the largest of our swallows, being about medial in size between the Robin and the English Sparrow. The male is dark steel blue, or nearly black, both above and below, with blue or purplish reflections. The female is of similar color above, and beneath is gray on the upper breast and white below. The tail is forked, but not so deeply as the Barn Swallow's.

The bird occurs throughout northeastern United States, but is quite local or rare. It occurs in open country, nesting in holes in trees and in compartment bird-houses put up for it. It is commoner southward, but scattered small colonies of the Purple Martin still occur in many places in the north. It migrates in April or May and September, and may sometimes be seen in migrations in regions where it does not rest.

of the species live largely amid the foliage of trees and are difficult to observe. For that reason, knowledge of their songs is of great aid in detecting their presence. They are good but not, as a rule, very fine singers. Most of the species have the long-continued type of song. Their singing is often incessant, and with some species it lasts later into the summer than with many other birds.

THE WHITE-EYED VIREO

Vireo griseus

This bird is smaller than the English Sparrow. The upper parts are bright olive-green, with yellowish-white wing-bars. The forehead and a ring about the eye, which has a white iris, are yellow. The under parts are white, becoming strongly yellow on the sides.

The bird is rather southern in range, but is common in summer north to Connecticut and southern New York, and less commonly to Massachusetts. It is missing in more northern regions and in mountainous regions further south. The bird is rather unlike other vireos in both habit and song. It inhabits thickets and tangles of vines, especially in stream-valleys. It lives chiefly near the ground, and is not at all a forest bird. The song is to be heard from the arrival of the bird in late April or May to about August first; it is commonly revived again in September, and is likely to be heard till the birds leave toward the end of that month.

The song of the White-eyed Vireo is not only unlike those of other vireos, but unlike that of any other bird. Once learned, it cannot be mistaken. It is short, rather musical, and distinctly emphatic. Its form, however, is very variable. Consonant sounds like *ch*, *k*, *t*, etc., are prominent. Most of the notes are short and quick, but nearly every song

contains a loud, clear, rather long whistled note like "whee," or, slurred downward, like "wheeo." The time of the different notes is extremely variable. In my collection of over one hundred different songs of this bird the number of notes varies from two to eleven, but is most commonly six or seven. Yet with all the variety there is always a certain likeness in character between the songs that makes them unmistakable.

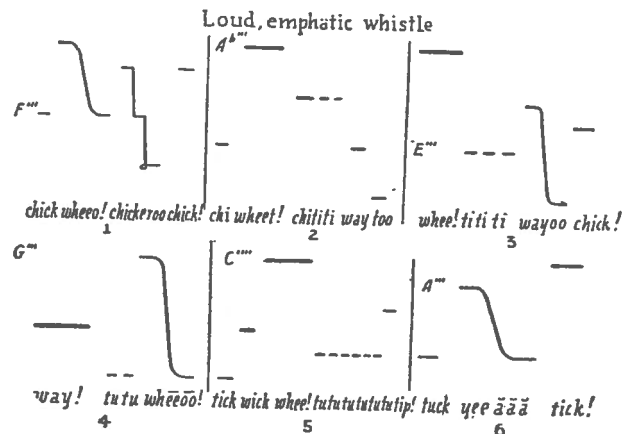


FIG. 83. SONGS OF THE WHITE-EYED VIREO

This variety is not entirely between different individuals, but each individual has a number of distinct songs. It usually delivers one of these over and over many times before changing to another, but how many one individual may have, I have not determined.

The call note is a short "click," which is also used by the female as an alarm note. In my experience the male is likely to use the song as an alarm note when the nest is threatened, and may sing it while sitting on the nest.

The Blue-headed Vireo is more northern in range than the Yellow-throated, being found in summer throughout the more northern and more mountainous regions. In fact, about where the Yellow-throated Vireo begins to get rare as a breeder, the Blue-headed begins to appear. I know of no region where both species are common breeders. But the Blue-head is an inhabitant of forest areas rather than village streets. South of its breeding range it occurs in migrations in April, early May, and late September and October. It is the first of the vireos to appear in spring. It sings on the migration and on the breeding-grounds till early August, and also more or less irregularly at other times in late August, and occasionally in September and October on the fall migration.

The song of the Blue-headed Vireo, while similar to those of the Yellow-throated and Red-eyed in form, is the finest of all the vireo songs. It is higher in pitch. The voice is sweet and clear. Notes are slurred together frequently, but not all slurred as with the Yellow-throated Vireo. Four-note phrases are common in this bird, but very rare in the Yellow-throated Vireo. Three- or four-note phrases usually have two notes slurred together, a three-note phrase which is very common being "tāwēēēto" (Fig. 85, No. 1, Phrase 2), the first two notes slurred together, the third abruptly connected. Four-note phrases are usually of two such abruptly connected phrases, such as "tēēyāhtōwāy" (Phrase 5) or "tōōātēēy." One individual usually has ten or twelve different phrases.

Sometimes, particularly after summer is advanced, the Blue-headed Vireo sings a warbled song; that is, it connects a number of phrases, making a continuous song of fifteen or twenty notes (Fig. 85, Nos. 2 and 3). This then resembles somewhat the song of a Warbling Vireo, but the sweeping slurs of the song easily distinguish it. The late occurrence of this form of song suggests that it is somewhat primitive, that the ancestral song of the vireos was a continuous warble, rather than a long-contin-

ued one broken into phrases. If that is the case, the Warbling Vireo's song is still of primitive character, and the Blue-head retains the song occasionally. This form of song is delivered at times in the middle of the commoner song, suggesting that the bird is too impatient to wait for

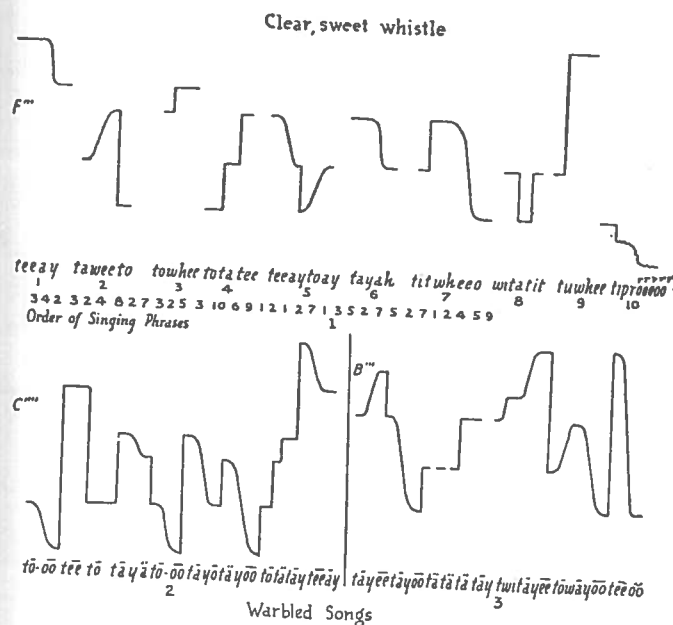


FIG. 85. SONGS OF THE BLUE-HEADED VIREO

the slow, regular rhythm to bring out his musical impulses, and so runs them all together in a short time. This form of song is fully as beautiful and entrancing as the slower song.

The phrase "tuprrrrr" is used not only in the song, but as a call note by both sexes. It is a beautiful note, with a pleasing little trill in it, but is totally different from other

or two repeated phrases from the commoner song, which distinguish the species.

High, clear and emphatic



FIG. 122. FLIGHT SONG OF THE YELLOWTHROAT

This flight song is sung as the bird rises from the ground to a height of twenty feet or more. It ceases when the bird reaches its highest point, when it turns about and drops silently back to the ground.

The call notes of this bird sound like "*skip*" and "*tseep*."

THE YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT

Icteria virens

This is the largest of the warblers. The bird is a little larger than an English Sparrow, and the bill is heavier in appearance than in other warblers. The upper parts are plain olive-green, with a white line above the eye and other white marks beneath it. The throat, breast, and sides are brilliant yellow, sometimes almost orange. The under parts are white.

This bird is rather southern in range, occurring in summer north to southern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan, central New York, and southern New England. It is fairly common in the right localities in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and southern New York. It inhabits thickets, preferring dense shrubbery and tangles of vines. It arrives early in May and remains till August. It sings from its arrival to the middle of July.

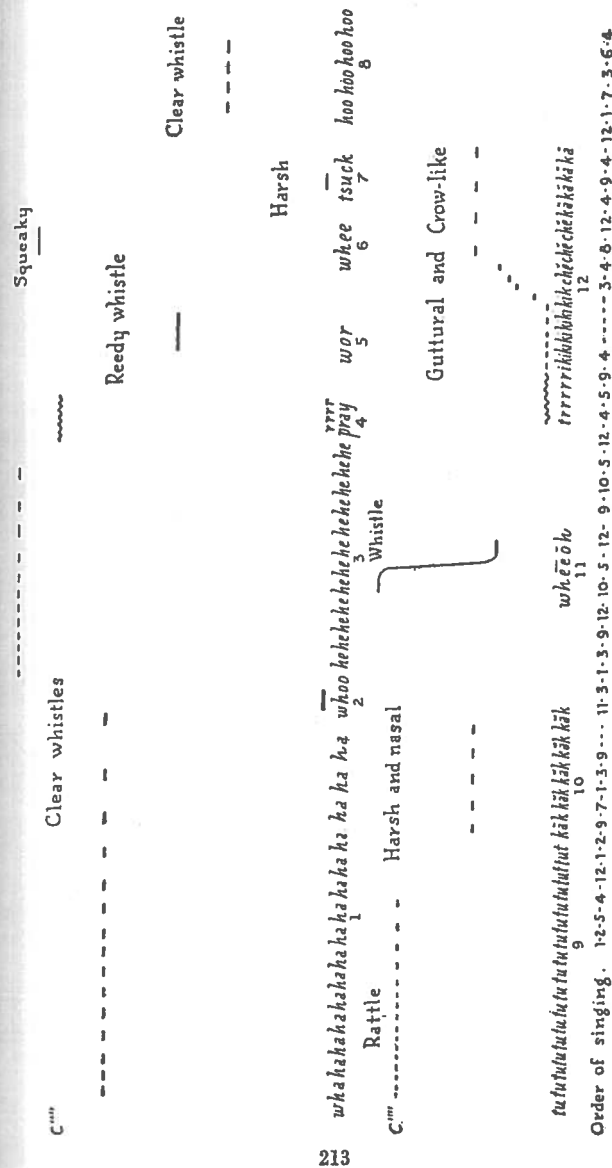


FIG. 123. SONG OF THE YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT

The time of singing is irregular, but averages about ten phrases in twenty-five seconds

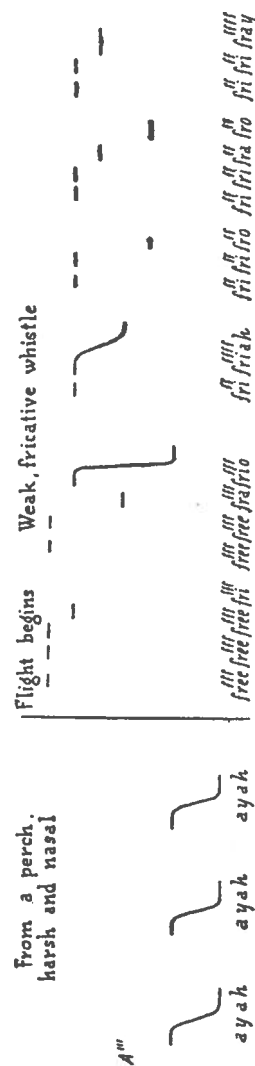


FIG. 131. FLIGHT SONG OF THE MEADOWLARK

the groups, but the whole song is much longer than the commoner song.

The call notes of this bird consist of a harsh, snarly-sounding downward slur, "eeyah," and a harsh, somewhat guttural chatter, the latter quite similar to a note used by the Baltimore Oriole.

THE RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD

Agelaius phoeniceus

This bird is a little smaller than the Robin. The male is entirely black except the shoulders, which are brilliant red, edged with yellow or yellowish white. Sometimes when the bird is at rest, the red color is entirely concealed, but the yellowish edge usually shows a little. The female is heavily striped with blackish gray, with some brown in the wings, a buff line above the eye, and the background of the under parts buff.

The Red-winged Blackbird is a common summer species throughout northeastern United States. It inhabits marshy or swampy areas, being abundant in cat-tail marshes or wet grass and sedge areas. It is also sometimes found in swampy thickets, and often in trees of swampy woods if they border more open marshes, but it does not nest in woods. The males arrive early in March and the females somewhat later. They leave in November, but often desert the breeding-grounds in small marshes for some larger marsh area in August. Singing begins with spring arrival and lasts till early July.

The song consists of one to four gurgly, liquid, musical notes followed by a trill (Fig. 132, Nos. 1 and 4), or more rarely a series of rapid notes connected by liquid consonants (No. 3). This final trill, in nine cases out of ten, is pitched on E'''. The notes preceding it are usually lower-pitched, but in some forms, where three or four notes precede the trill, the last of them is a tone or so higher than the trill (No. 4). Some songs have a final low-pitched

the bird sings in multiples of eight. But this rule is not invariable, and occasionally songs may contain seventeen or eighteen or twenty-five notes. While the pitch is normally uniform, occasional birds vary it a half-tone or more, and rare songs vary the time from slow to fast or fast to slow.

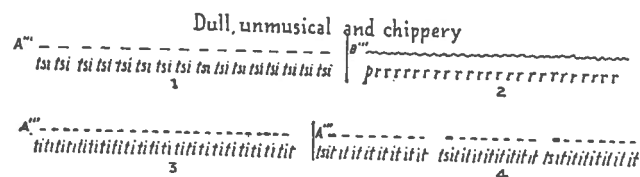


FIG. 156. SONGS OF THE CHIPPING SPARROW

In the very early morning, before sunrise and soon after it is daylight, the Chipping Sparrow varies its vocalization by singing a very short song, usually eight notes only, over and over rapidly, with pauses between repetitions which are no longer and usually shorter than the song itself (No. 4). The call note is a simple, short "tsip" or a slightly higher-pitched "tseet."

THE FIELD SPARROW

Spizella pusilla

This bird is smaller than the English Sparrow. The upper parts are light brown, with the usual sparrow stripes. The top of the head is light reddish brown and the upper back rather reddish, so that there is not the distinct contrast between color of head and back that there is in the Chipping Sparrow. The side of the head and a line over the eye are gray, while lines through the eye and on the side of the throat are reddish. There are two light wing-bars. The under parts are pale grayish white, with light brown on the sides. The bill is pink, and the tail forked.

The Field Sparrow is found in summer north to southern Maine, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. It is common

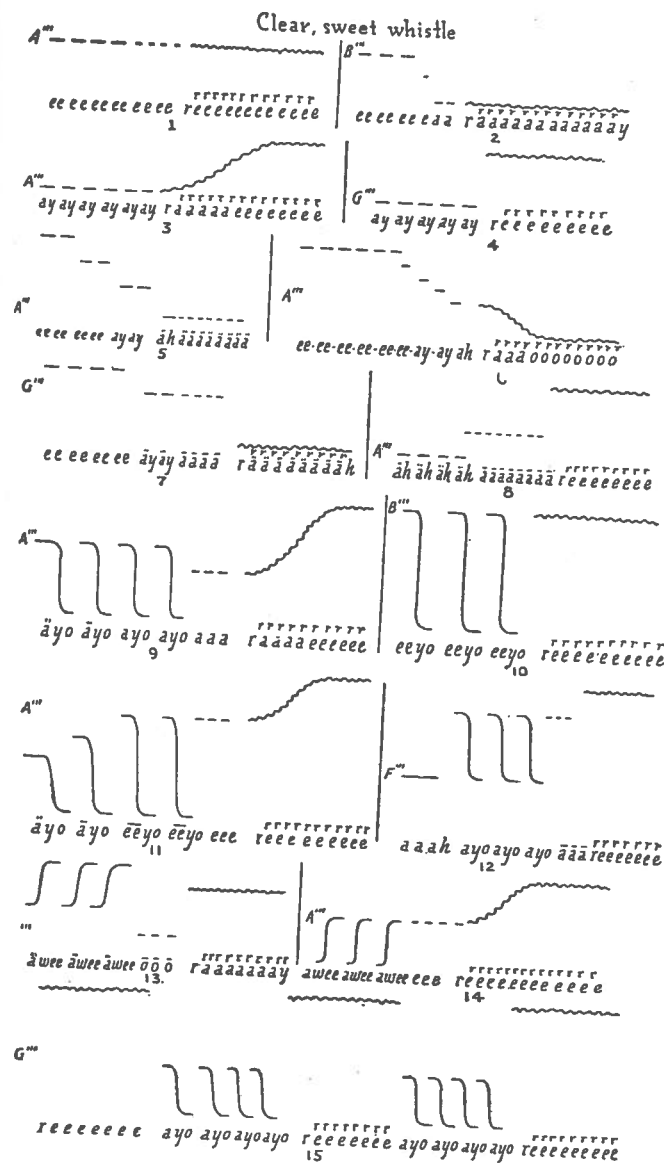


FIG. 157. SONGS OF THE FIELD SPARROW