

HUMMING BIRD.

It took a great deal of time and patience to picture the ~~birds~~ wrens, chickadees and warblers but

1 * It was not till we had studied, watched and waited with the camera for four different nesting seasons that we succeeded in getting a series of pictures of the home life of the humming bird.

2 * He use to drop into our garden like the flying fleck from a rainbow, probe at the geranium blossoms and disappear as a flash from a whirling mirror. I often watched him and listened to the musical hum of his wings, as it rose and fell in sweetest cadences. I always had the unsatisfied tinge of disappointment as I was left gazing at the trail of this little shooting star of our garden, that hummed as well as glowed. I longed to have him and call him mine. Not caged, mercy no! I wanted his lichen-shingled home in the Virginia creeper, his two pearly eggs, the horned midgets, the little fledglings, the mother as she injected them with food, and I wanted the glint of real live sun-shine that hovered and poised at the flowers and got away like a little ethereal spite. More than that, I wanted to have forever with me this mite that possesses the tiniest soul in feathers.

The first year, by the merest chance, I found the nest that had been placed in the wild blackberry vines just above the creek. The green fibers and the lichens that shingled the outside of the tiny cup, blended so well with the green leaves and stems of the vines. The cotton lining of the nest and the two white eggs looked exactly like the clusters of white blossoms surrounding. One might have looked all over the vine a

dozen times and yet not discovered the nest.

3* Another pair of hummers took up a homestead on the hillside. The bank had been cut down to build a wood-road but the place had been abandoned a generation ago. The hummer saddled her tiny cup on the lowest branch of a small fir at the top of the bank. It looked as if she had picked out a spot to please the photographer.

4* At first, the little capsules had such a delicate flesh tint of pink. Then, one morning, I stood over the nest like Thomas of old. Some one had replaced the eggs with two black bugs. It might have been a miracle! There was a tiny knob on the end of each bug that looked like it might be the beginning of a bill. Each little creature looked more like a black bean, for there was a slight streak of brown, down the middle of the back. They couldn't be beans, for they were pulsing with life in a lumpy sort of way. I went frequently to look at them. In a few days the nestlings began to fork out all over with tiny black horns, till they might have looked more like prickly pears had they been the right color. At the next stage, each little horn began to blossom out into a spray of brown down, the yellow at one end grew into a bill, the black skin cracked a trifle and showed two eyes. It was hard to see just how those black bugs could turn to humming birds, but each day my credulity grew till I really saw two young hummers.

5* I don't believe any sun-worshiper of old could be

more devoted than the humming bird. He lives in the sun almost as a fish does in the water. The minute a cloud crosses the face of the sun his feathers puff up and his eye loses its sparkle. It's hard for a hummer to endure cold and cloudy weather, let alone a season of rain.

6*

2 YOUNG

I was standing on the hillside one bright May morning when two hummers caught my attention. One whirred downward like the rush of a rocket. He ascended, whirling up till I could see only a blurred speck in the blue. Then he dropped headlong like a red meteor, with his gorget puffed out and his tail spread wide. Instead of striking with a burst of flying sparks, he veered just above the bushes with a sound, like the lash of a whip drawn swiftly through the air, and, as the impetus carried him up, a high-pitched musical trill burst in above the whir of his wings. Again and again, he swung back and fourth like a comet in its orbit. If he were courting, his aim was surely to dazzle and move with irresistable charm. I think his method was to sweep at his lady-love with a show of glittering brillancy and gorgeous display and win her heart in one grand charge.

7*

YOUNG ON
LINE

He must have won her, for the pair built a home in the Virginia creeper. They took one of the loose strings that had been used to tie up the vine and wove it into the fabric of their home; if the floor beneath gave way, they would surely have support from above.

8*

NEST &
STRING

The way the mother would light on her nest was a marvel

9* to me. She always stopped on the dead twig of a maple before dropping to her home. I saw her do it several times. She came at the nest like a meteoric streak. I held my breath lest the whole thing be splintered to atoms, for she hit the little cup without the slightest pause that I could see. But when she lit it was like the touch of floating thistle down. (This shows the mother poising on the nest-edge, the wings in full motion, taken at one two-hundredths part of a second. The wings are entirely invisible).

10* When the day was warm the mother didn't brood long at a time. It often looked to me as if it ~~were~~ only child's play at sitting. Five minutes was such a long wearisome spell, she just had to take a turn about the garden. I often thought the tiny eggs would chill through before she returned, and I began to lose hope in her restless, shiftless manner. But she knew best. *

11* We found it one of the most difficult tasks in bird photography to get a picture of the hummer as she circled about the clusters of geranium. We were accustomed to fill some of the flowers with sweetened water and the mother soon learned of this. Then by focusing the camera on certain of these blossoms we waited our chance. She seemed only to will to be at a flower and she was there, the hum of the wings was all that told the secret. She was a marvel in the air. She backed as easily as she darted forward. She side-stepped, rose or dropped as easily as she poised. (This picture was given 1-800 of a second exposure)

12*

1200

P

13* While the nestings were very young, the mother never left them alone long at a time. If the day was warm, and the sun shone on the nest, the mother hovered over with wings and tail spread wide. When it was the hottest, I've seen the mother sit forward on the nest-edge, spread her tail till she showed the white tips of her feathers, and keep up a constant quivering, fanning motion with wings and tail to give protection to the frail midgets in the nest. (This was taken on 1-700 second. Motion not perceptible).

14*

15* When I first crawled in among the bushes close to the nest, the little mother darted at me and poised a foot from my nose, as if to stare me out of countenance. She looked me all over from head to foot twice, then she seemed satisfied, I was harmless. She whirled and sat on the nest-edge. (This shows the mother feeding her young). The bantlings opened wide their hungry mouths. She spread her tail like a flicker, and braced herself against the nest-side. She craned her neck and drew her dagger-like bill straight up above the nest. She plunged it down the baby's throat to the hilt, she started a series of gestures that seemed to puncture him to the toes. Then she stabbed the other baby till it made me shudder. She was only giving them a dinner, after the usual humming method of regurgitation. It looked to me like the murker of the infants, but they were not mangled and bloody. They ran out their slender tongues to lick the honey from their lips. How they liked it!

16*

But best of all and as a final view I love
to look at "Parsons at Home". A picture that
is complete in its make-up and taken after the

After the meal ^{when} the mother, settled herself to brood
her nestlings. Occasionally, ~~she~~ ^{ING} reached ^A under to caress them
with whisperings of mother-love.

Now turn to some of large
birds