

Concord River

pouring forth cries of rage and abuse. Doubtless every expletive known to the Corvine vocabulary was hurled after the big *Bubo* as he flapped off through the trees. He did not go far this time — only to the crest of the ridge, in fact — where I left him and his sable tormentors to their own devices.

Start here--

September 7, 1892

NIGHT SOUNDS. I spent last night in my canoe on the shore near the landing. For an hour or more after going to bed (at 10 P.M.) I lay awake listening for the night sounds but I heard only the rustling of Mice in the leaves, the intermittent rasping of wood borers in the wood-pile near me, the ceaseless monotone of the tree crickets in the birches overhead, and every few minutes the lispings notes of migrating Warblers. The last did not seem to be passing in greater numbers than has been the case during most of the clear nights during the past two weeks, but very possibly there were many flying at so great a height that their feeble notes did not reach my ears for, as I shall presently relate, the country was flooded with migrants the next morning.

After sleeping soundly through the night, I awoke just as day was breaking. There was no fog save a very little lying close to the surface of the water. The east was all aglow with rosy light while the moon, low down in the west, still sent its pale rays through openings in the foliage and silvered the sleeping meadows.

SNIFE DRUMS. The first sound that I heard was the whistling of Ducks' wings. Then suddenly from directly overhead and with

Concord River

startling clearness came the weird humming of a Snipe, and after an interval of a few seconds, during which I had an opportunity to convince myself that I was really awake, the bird drummed again very near me and then flew about low down on the meadow, marking its course by a succession of scaipes. The "drumming" was precisely like that produced by this bird in spring. I have never heard it in autumn before and know of only one instance (communicated to me by Faxon, who heard a Snipe drum in the early evening last September on Rock Meadows) where it has been noted by others.

FLIGHT OF BOBOLINKS. As daylight strengthened, Bobolinks began chinking and I heard them at frequent intervals until the sun rose, but not afterwards. One and all seemed to be moving southward at a considerable height.

Shortly after sunrise I fell asleep and it was 7 A.M. when I again awoke and stepped from my cramped quarters out into the air and sunshine. It was a truly glorious morning, not the least speck of cloud visible in the tender blue dome overhead, the air as clear as possible, the sunshine bright and warm, every leaf and blade of grass frosted with big dew drops.

CANADA NUTHATCH. A Canada Nuthatch, the first that I have noted this season, was gleaning its breakfast among the cones of a pitch pine on the hillside above me and every now and then uttering its prolonged nasal whining as if expressing discontent at the quality or quantity of its food.

FALL MIGRATIONS. For three weeks or more small birds have been very scarce both as regards species and individuals. As

Concord River

nearly as I could make out, the region has been gradually but almost completely drained of such summer residents as habitually migrate before this date while few birds from further north have appeared in their places, although there have been many good flights *overhead* during favorable nights.

ARRIVAL OF A GREAT BIRD-WAVE. But this morning witnessed a great change, for the country was simply flooded with small birds and it was evident that a very heavy flight had arrived during the night. Everywhere that I went the thickets, swamps, oak and pine woods were alive with Warblers, Sparrows, etc., flitting about singly, in small parties, and in mixed flocks of considerable size. In a comparatively limited space I identified upwards of ten species which I have not hitherto seen at all this month and most of the species which have been on my list were greatly augmented in respect to the number of individuals.

At first — up to 10 A.M., perhaps — many of these little strangers showed great restlessness, flying continually from place to place and sometimes rising high in air by spiral courses as if tempted to resume their journey by broad daylight, but all such venturesome spirits descended again after more or less wide wandering and plunged headlong into the woods or thickets. By noon they were as quiet and reconciled to their surroundings as if they had passed the summer here.

MARSH HAWK'S LEGS CARRIED STRETCHED OUT BEHIND DURING FLIGHT. An adult male Marsh Hawk passed very near me this afternoon on its way across the river in front of my cabin and I distinctly saw its legs and feet extended backward and pressed

Concord River

close against the under side of the tail. I had supposed that all Hawks carried the legs doubled at the tarsal joint and the feet buried in the feathers of the belly or, rather, breast. This bird was skimming over the open water on set wings and in the usual slow, effortless manner.

FLOCKS OF NIGHT-HAWKS. A few minutes after the sun had set this evening, while I was standing at my landing watching the gorgeous coloring of the clouds in the west, a Night-hawk suddenly appeared nearly overhead, coming from behind me. Turning quickly I perceived no less than thirteen others, all flying in the same general direction (towards the west). The flock, for such it evidently was, spread over the whole width (150 yards) of the river and its numbers kept at approximately even distances from one another and flew with a steadiness and directness very unusual to these erratic creatures, although the temptation to turn aside to seize some tempting insect prize was not always resisted and once one chased another back and forth, pursuer and pursued doubling and twisting like startled Snipe. One bird uttered several times a flat, squeaky *paap*. Evidently these Night-hawks were migrating and following the course of the river. I watched until dark but they did not come back as feeding birds would surely have done. They were followed after a brief interval by a smaller flock of nine individuals. The appearance of the larger body strongly (and strangely) suggested a cavalry charge, despite their slow advances. There was something very impressive in their orderly and deliberate sweep across the glowing sky — a deep earnestness of purpose and untold reserve energy and determination in the mien of

Concord River

that dusky squadron with its broad front and evenly spaced double ranks. . . .

GREAT BIRD-WAVE MOVES ON AT NIGHTFALL. Directly night had fairly fallen, the air became filled with small migrating birds whose lisping and chirping calls to one another were practically incessant. At first I heard only the notes of Warblers and perhaps Sparrows, also, but after 10 o'clock the cries of Thrushes were numerous and frequent. There was no abatement of these sounds up to the time I went to sleep but late in the night I awoke repeatedly and listened in vain for any bird voices.

These facts, taken in connection with my experience next day, indicate clearly enough that the big bird-wave which descended on this region this morning resumed its onward sweep to-night as soon as the light had faded from the west and that it was not followed by any considerable movement. It was certainly an unusually well-defined and extensive "rush" for its passage to-night occupied at least four hours and probably much longer. Yet it had wholly ceased long before daybreak. The night was still, clear, and comparatively very warm up to midnight but chilly towards daybreak.

End here

September 13, 1892

To Ball's Hill by canoe at 3 P.M., sailing most of the way down. An Osprey and a Kingfisher almost the only birds seen save a Phoebe and a few Song Sparrows.

OSPREY CATCHES A TORTOISE. The Osprey was fishing over the broad reach opposite Ball's Hill. Poising in one spot at a height