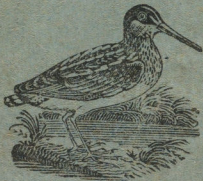


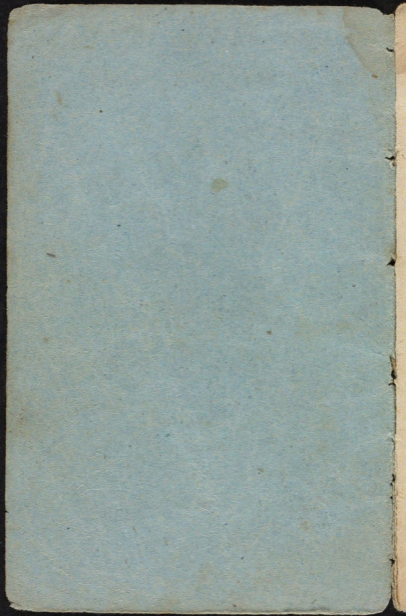
No. 8.

THE
CHILD'S BOOK
ABOUT
BIRDS.



CONCORD, N. H.
RUFUS MERRILL & CO.


1843.



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The Alphabet.

A B C D E F G

H I J K L M N

O P Q R S T U

V W X Y Z

a b c d e f g

h i j k l m n

o p q r s t u

v w x y z

BIRDS.



Swan.



So much difference is there between this bird when on land and in the water, that it is hardly to be supposed the same; for in the latter, no bird can possibly exceed it for beauty and majestic appearance.

When it ascends from its favorite element, its motions are awkward, and its neck is stretched forward with an air of stupidity; it has, indeed, the air of being only a larger sort of goose; but when seen gliding smoothly along the water, displaying a thousand graceful attitudes, and moving at pleasure without the smallest apparent effort, there is not a more beautiful figure in all nature. It will swim faster than a man can walk.

This bird has long been rendered domestic; and it is now a doubt whether there be any of the tame kind in a state of nature. The color of the tame swan is entirely white, and it generally weighs full twenty pounds.

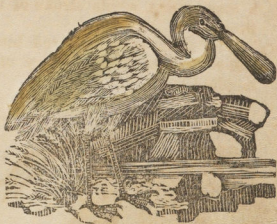
This beautiful bird is as delicate in its appetites as it is elegant in its form. Its chief food is corn, bread,

herbs growing in the water, and roots and seeds, which are found near the margin. At the time of incubation, it prepares a nest in some retired part of the bank, and chiefly where there is an islet in the stream. The swan lays seven or eight white eggs, one every other day, much larger than those of a goose, with a hard shell. It sits six weeks. It is not a little dangerous to approach the old ones. When their little families are feeding among them, their fears as well as their pride seem to take alarm, and when in danger, the old birds carry off the young ones when in danger. A female has been known to attack and drown a fox, which was swimming toward her nest; they are able to throw down and trample on youths of fifteen or sixteen; and it was once thought that

an old swan could break the leg of a man with a single stroke of its wing.

The swan is a long-lived bird, and sometimes attains the age of a hundred years.



Spoonbill.

This stately and elegant bird inhabits the sea-shores of America from Brazil to Georgia. It also appears to wander up the Mississippi sometimes in summer. It is however rarely seen to the northward of Altamaha river, and even along the peninsula of Florida it is a rare bird; in Jamaica and several

other of the West India islands, Mexico and Guiana, it is more common, but confines itself chiefly to the sea-shore and the mouths of rivers. It wades about in quest of shell-fish, marine insects, small crabs, and fish. It occasionally swims and dives in pursuit of these. The young of this bird are said to be of a blackish chestnut the first year, of a roseate color the second year; and of a deep scarlet the third.

This bird is about the size of a heron, but somewhat shorter in the neck and legs. The bill is more than half a foot long, and has the shape of a spoon. The wisdom of Providence is conspicuous in the conformation of this bill, which is adapted to the habits and manner of feeding of these birds, and to catch frogs and lizards.

Skua Gull.

This bird is of the size of the raven. It is a most formidable bird, preying not only upon fish, but upon all the smaller water-fowl, and even on young lambs. In defending its young, it has the fierceness of the eagle; and when the inhabitants of the Faro Isles attack its nest, they hold a knife over their heads, on which the skua will transfix itself in its fall on the invaders.

Sandpiper.

The sandpiper is very abundant in summer along the rivers Schuylkill and Delaware. It is remarkable for perpetually wagging the tail, as some others are for nodding the head; for whether running on the

ground or on the fences; along the rails or in the water, this motion seems continual; even the young, as soon as they are freed from the shell, run about, constantly wagging the tail.

These birds breed in the cornfields. The nest is wholly composed of pieces of straw. On the approach of any person, the parents exhibit signs of great distress, counterfeiting lameness, and fluttering along the ground with seeming difficulty. On the appearance of a dog, this agitation is greatly increased; and it is very interesting to observe with what dexterity the female will lead him from her young by throwing herself repeatedly before him, fluttering off, and keeping just within his reach, on a contrary direction from her helpless brood.

Long-legged Plover.

This very singular bird inhabits the south of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, but rarely visits England. It has a slender, black bill, two inches and a half in length; the back, the crown of the head, and the wings, are glossy black; the tail is white, inclining to gray. But what distinguishes this bird

from all others is the astonishing and seemingly absurd length of its legs. It might with propriety be called the Stilt Plover.

Killdeer Plover.

This bird is a common and constant resident of the United States. In winter it retreats to the seashore; but in spring it resorts to the new-ploughed fields, or level plains bare of grass.

During the breeding season, nothing can exceed the alarm and anxiety of these birds. Their cries of *killdeer*, *killdeer*, as they winnow the air overhead, dive and course round you, or run along the ground counterfeiting lameness, are shrill and incessant. During the evening, particularly in moonlight, their cries are frequently heard repeated with considerable violence.

Wren.

Here is a wren, and a lively little fellow he is too. He makes his nest in a hole about the house, and sings his cheery little song to any body who will listen. I will tell you a story of two wrens. A man hung his coat upon a fence, and there he left it for several days. Two wrens, who were poking about, to find a place to build a nest in, came across the coat, and concluded to build in one of the sleeves. So they went to work, and in a few days they finished their nest. By

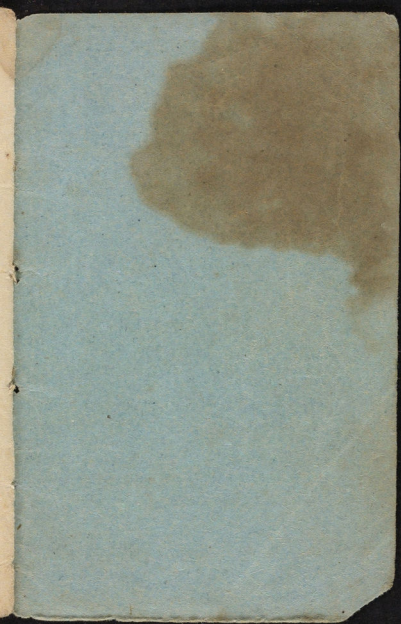
this time the man came, and carried his coat away. He was very much surprised to find a nest in one of the sleeves. The wrens were very angry at his taking away their nest; they flew after him, and called him all the hard names they could think of; but it did no good.

The house wren inhabits the whole of the United States, and in every part is migratory. It is four inches and a half long, the whole upper parts are of a deep brown, crossed with black, except the head and neck, which are plain. The legs and feet are of a light clay color; the whole plumage below the surface is bluish ash. The female differs very little in plumage from the male.

Hoopoe.

Of this bird there is only one species known to Europeans, which is diffused over the whole of the Old Continent. It weighs above twelve ounces, and is twelve inches in length.

The distinguishing character of this bird is a beautiful crest of about two inches high, of a pale orange tipped with black, and which it can erect at pleasure. It is a solitary bird, living upon insects.



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