

YELLOW THROAT.

Just below the brow of Marquam hill, half a mile above the creek, a little spring bubbles out of an alder copse. Instead of trickling down the hillside, like an ordinary streamlet, the water scatters and seeps into the spongy soil; it forms a wet place an acre or so in extent, over which has sprung up, a rich growth of swamp grass. This is the Yellow-throat's home. I call it the witches' garden.

There's a fascination about lying in the shade of the alders on the brow of the hill. Over head, on the top branches of the maple, is the favorite perch of a meadow lark, who never fails to rear a brood of singers each season. He scatters his notes downward like the wind of Autumn whirls the red and gold tinted leaves. A flicker rattles his salute from the hollow top of a fir stump. But these do not charm me like the fanciful call of the Yellow-throat. You may hear him almost any time of the day calling, "witch-et-y! witch-et-y! witch-et-y!" Yes, you may hear him, but seldom see him.

What a little deceiver this golden spite is! Looking for his nest is something like searching for the bags of gold at the rainbow's tip. If you stand under the alders, looking down over the garden, he will call, "here-it-is! here-it-is! Here!" and a minute later he will shriek the same lie from another tussock ten yards away.

It seems to be the appointed duty of this little witch to sing his lies all day long, while his wife broods the eggs.

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He wears a jet black mask across his face. Perhaps, when Nature distributed the bird clothes, she gave him this just so he could sing his falsehoods without a blush. The lady hops about without the sign of a veil, while the gentleman always wears a mask; its the Turkish custom reversed.

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While I was honest and open in my treatment of Yellow-throat, he simply met every advance I made with deceit. I tried to visit his house again and again when Mrs. Yellow-throat was at home, but every time he led me by a different path to the furthest limits of the garden. At last, I tried strategy. I took a long rope and two of us crept up to the edge of the garden late one afternoon. We quietly spread out, each taking an end of the cord. At a signal we skirted the opposite sides of the garden on a dead run, brushing the grass-tops with the rope. Just as it switched across the lower end, a yellow streak flashed in the air like a rocket, and as quickly disappeared. She had never dreamed of a snake sweeping the grass-tops at such a lightning speed as that rope went. It scared her witless. I walked over and saw her nest and four eggs set down in the middle of a thick tussock.

At last, I had the little deceivers in my power. Later on we laid siege with the camera, but not in a way the least obtrusive. A sarvis-berry bush grew a few feet away, which was a favorite perch of both parents. We soon had a rampart of

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limbs built, from behind which, the camera was leveled at the bush. After covering everything with green, and attaching a long hose and bulb to the shutter, we were ready. Many times I saw the mother come with spiders for her young and once the camera did not fail to picture her. She always held the insect carefully so as not to perforate its body.

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Yellow-throat, according to my ideas, was more of an ideal father than most male birds. He worked side by side with his wife and never failed or faltered for an instant. In fact, he often marched squarely up in the face of the camera, when his mate had some hesitancy in facing the stare of the big round eye. At times the father brought bites that were almost too large for the youngsters to swallow.

It takes patience to catch bird photographs. Patience is the salt of the old bird-catching legend. You may have to wait hours at a time, often, a whole day slips by without getting a single good picture, but if you have had your eyes open, you have not failed to pick up some interesting bits of information.

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The next day, as I sat in the shade watching the two bantlings, I had to roll over in laughter at their actions. Each youngster was afraid his brother would get the next morsel, and his fears were quite often realized. Two or three times, they became so excited that they went at each other, as if it were going to be a case of "may the best man win". I don't believe in brothers quarreling, but once or twice, while I was watching, I

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saw just cause for disagreement. Both mother and father were putting their whole energy to satisfying the two little stomachs that seemed to go empty as fast as they were filled. The two bairns were sitting side by side when the mother dropped to the perch and gave the nearer youngster a big caterpillar. The father came two minutes later. If he tried to tell, who had the last bite, by looking at those wide stretched mouths he was fooled. In a twinkling, the same chick had taken the morsel he brought. "That belongs to me," yelled the brother, in righteous indignation, but it was too late, the father had gone, so he squatted down beside this squirming brother with a stoical expression, that showed it was better to be a little too empty than a bit too full.

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