

One may say that the towhee is no great shakes in the bird world for size, song, or dramatics. Perhaps he wouldn't be mentioned in the same breath with the glorious soaring eagle that pierces the upper sky with his wild scream of power and freedom. Nor would he be mentioned with the scintillating, gauzy-winged hummingbird, so little and so lovely that once seen is never forgotten. But the humble towhee of the black head and collar, the rich, red-brown sides and white under parts, and glittering red eyes has something that none of these other fine bird ~~folks~~ have. He is the shy, never failing companion of many a kitchen window. He likes his chosen home, and he likes the home folks who feed him all the year around. For Oregonus stays with us summer and winter, ~~through~~ ~~sun and storm~~. And that is something ~~to mention~~ worth mentioning in a part of the world that drizzles and glowers for the better part of twelve months, and once in a while freezes up.

The towhee is also called chewink and ground bird and when it comes to interpretations of his call notes, they are just as intelligible as the poly-glot gibberish on the war-torn eastern European border. Anybody's ~~attempt~~ ^{guess} is just as good as the next one's. The towhee group are shy birds of the chaparral and when for a closer look at you step up ~~to~~ a bush that is topped by a singing bird, it embarrasses him and he is liable to jump down to the ground giving you only a flash of his white tail feathers. and a mewling, nasal complaint. Here's ~~how~~ ^{and leave hurriedly} one disappointed observer got out it: "whank-yang, kit-er-er." Another listener had it right down pat and couldn't be mistaken: "ah-fewgee-wee^w-pilly-willy-willy." Another ~~highly~~ ^{highly} ~~trained~~ who was a musician with a carefully trained ear was perfectly ~~satisfied~~ ^{this windy} with sure she heard: "meah-sit-sit-sit-whoo-oo-oo." Here is a fine chance for ~~anybody~~ ^{one} who likes a windy argument to join the contest. At least the towhee has got everybody guessing, ~~what he says~~. *Major Bowes*

The genus pipilo has a number of species. Spotted Towhees of which the Oregon towhee ~~is one~~, is perhaps one of the most colorful and interesting, in part due to a certain fatherly alertness for the whole clan. No sound or movement, whether hostile or friendly, escapes his notice. Only at mating time does towhee throw caution to the wind s. Then he mounts a sapling and ~~chases~~ ^{"chases"}

Also "hoorif-gee-gee."

by the hour, whether to distract attention from his sitting lady, or to openly entertain and assure her through the long hours. All through the fall and winter the towhees had scratched about under the plants that bordered the house. ^{And} ~~The~~

brighter male had made trips continually from the feeding tray to the nest somewhere down the hillside, a nest which might be either in a bush or on the ground, and made of leaves and small sticks lined with grass. There were four or five pale bluish eggs specked with brown and lavender. Towhee enjoyed the feeding tray and was perhaps the most regular boarder. There were always lots of bread crumbs, scraps of food, raisins and a piece of suet tied up. The suet, however, came later in the season and then little Gairdner woodpecker and the chickadees claimed this as their special dish. If the tray became empty at any time, towhee gave a warning. He sat under the window, and even came up on the sill, ^{and pleaded and whined} ~~and wailed~~ that someone had forgotten him entirely. He wailed that he was actually starving. Actually, he was plump and glossy-coated, ready for the coming dreariness of winter, but he couldn't help playing on your sympathies.

With approaching winter when the air was cold, ~~and~~ there was a dew on the ground, and the grapes were so ripe they were almost wind, the towhees banded together down the hill, ~~swinging on the skeleton limbs, talking hunting~~ ^{rattling} and scratching like little hens, tossing the leaves into the air. Or they sat in a bunch talking listlessly in a half nude tree yellowed by a weakening sun.

The group of towhees known as "spotted towhees", of which the Oregon towhee is a member, are found in western United States and Mexico among the chaparral. They are very shy and refuse to stay where they can be observed. Just as you hear one sing and catch sight of him on the top of a bush, he sees you and down he pops and starts scratching ~~the~~ among the leaves under the bushes. His head, neck, and chest are black, the throat with a white spot, and very rarely the back of the head streaked with rufous; upper parts black; middle and wing coverts tipped with white forming two spots; wings short and barred with white; tail long edged with white, *eye red.*

In Southern California in the coast district, and ~~down~~ south into Lower California, is found the San Diego towhee which is deep glossy black with heavy white markings on the wings. The Arctic towhee has extensive white markings on both wings and tail and the shoulders are heavily streaked with white. It breeds in the plains and among the foothills of the Rockies from southern Alberta to central Montana and northern Nebraska, and winters from eastern Colorado to southern Texas. The spurred towhee lives from British Columbia south into Mexico, and from eastern California to the central states. The San Clemente towhee is found on San Clemente and other islands of southern California.

The
The ~~canyon~~ or fuscous towhees form a numerous species that is distinguished by their fluffy, brown, sparrow-like appearance. It is often called the brown chippy from its note, a loud metallic "chip." The best known of this species is the brown towhee of the Pacific slope and central Mexico. Throughout California it is known as the California towhee or Crissal Bunting.

The Abert's ~~towhee~~ or gray towhee is found in Arizona, southern Nevada, southeastern Utah, northwestern New Mexico and southeastern California, and south in winter to Lower California. It is a uniform light brown above, darker and grayer on the wings and tail, pale wood-brown beneath, and paler on breast, tinged with reddish-cinnamon on throat which is streaked with dusky.

The green-tailed towhee inhabits the mountain districts of western United States, also from eastern Rockies to Coast Range of California, north to Montana and Idaho and eastern Washington, south to southern California, southern New Mexico, western Texas, winters in Mexico and Lowr California.

Anthony towhee is like the Crissal, but smaller, range from South Calif. to Lower Cal.

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Wild fruits of all kinds, from strawberries and blackberries to wild cherries and grapes are eaten by the towhees. However, seeds and insects are their principal foods. Beetles and their larvae, ants, moths, caterpillars, grasshoppers, flies, and earthworms are destroyed by the towhees. Most of the towhees nest on the ground or in low bushes.

Green-tailed towhee is an individualist both in color and temperament. One would hardly recognize him as one of the genus. Not knowing it, one might take a guess that it was an overgrown warbler, or a cross perhaps a cross between a yellow-breasted chat and a chipping sparrow. Its crown is sparrow red, its throat white sharply outlined against a background of gray, the wings and tail a greenish-brown quite sparrow-like. It is a bird of the upland sage and lupine spaces. The first note that one would be likely to hear is a dainty mewing, but the bird has a surprising repertory of song. There is something dashing and wren-like about his more familiar ditties. This bird is eerie and secretive about its nest, flitting of like a faint rainbow shadow.

Towhee, the Shy Garden Songster - by Irene Finley

One may say that the towhee is no great shakes in the bird world for size, song, or dramatics. Perhaps he would never be mentioned in the same breath with the glorious, soaring eagle that pierces the upper sky with his wild scream of power and freedom. Nor would he be mentioned with the scintillating, gauzy-winged hummingbird, so little and so lovely that once seen is never forgotten. But the humble towhee of the black head and collar, the rich red-brown sides and white underparts, and glittering red eye has something that none of these other fine birds have. He is the shy, never failing companion of the kitchen window. He likes his chosen home, and he likes the home folks who feed him all the year around. For Oregonus stays with us summer and winter. And that is something worth mentioning in a part of the world that drizzles and glowers for the better part of twelve months, and once in a while freezes up.

The towhee is also called chewink and ground bird and when it comes to interpretations of his call notes, they are just as numerous and intelligible as the polyglott dialects on the war-torn European borders. The towhee group are shy birds of the chaparral and when you step up for a closer look at a bush that is topped by a singing bird, it embarrasses him and he is liable to drop down to the ground and leave hurriedly, giving you only a flash of his white tail feathers, and a mewling nasal complaint. Here is what one disappointed observer got out of it: "whank-yang-kit-er-er-er." Another made it out: "hoorip-zee-zee-ee." A third who was a musician with a carefully trained ear was perfectly sure she heard: "meah-sit-sit-sit-whoo-whoo." A fourth listener had it right down pat and couldn't be mistaken: "ah-fewgee-wee-wee-pilly-pilly-willy." Here is evidently a fine chance for one who likes a windy argument to join the contest. At least the towhee has everybody guessing.

The genus Pipilo has a number of species. Spotted towhees, of which the Oregon towhee is one, are found in western U. S. and Mexico among the chaparral. Oregonus is perhaps one of the most colorful and interesting, in part due to a certain fatherly alertness for the whole clan. No sound or movement, hostile or friendly, escapes his notice. Only at mating time does towhee throw caution to the winds. Then he mounts a sapling and "churrs" by the hour,

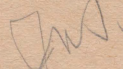
whether to distract attention from his sitting lady, or to openly entertain and assure her through the long hours. All through the summer and fall the towhees had scratched about under the plants that bordered the house. And the brighter male had made trips continually from the feeding tray to the nest somewhere down the hillside, a nest which might be either in a ^{low} bush or on the ground, and made of leaves and small sticks lined with grass. There were four or five pale bluish eggs speckled with brown and lavender.

Towhee enjoyed the feeding tray and was perhaps the most regular boarder. There were always lots of bread crumbs, raisins, and scraps of food. Later in the season when the weather began to be nippy, there were chunks of suet tied up to the apple trees. Gairdner woodpecker and the chickadees claimed this as their special dish. If the tray became empty by chance, the towhee ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ called attention to it. He sat under the window and even came up on the sill. He pleaded and whined that some one had forgotten him entirely. He wailed that he was actually starving. Actually he was plump and glossy-coated, ready for the coming dreariness of winter, but he couldn't help playing on your sympathies.

With approaching winter when the air was cold, the dew ~~on~~ was on the grass of mornings, and the grapes were so ripe they were almost wine, the towhees banded together down the hill, hunting and scratching like little hens, tossing the rustling leaves into the air. Or they sat in a bunch talking listlessly in a half nude tree yellowed by a weakening sun.

Wherever you are in the middle and western parts of the country, you may find a towhee that has adopted a district that suits him. *Pipilo erythrophthalmus* is black except for white belly, brown sides, white patches on the wings and corners of tail, and bright red eye. He is found from Canada to the lower Mississippi Valley, and from the Atlantic to the western parts of Dakota and Nebraska. *Pipilo maculatus oregonus* is much like the bird just described but with white trimmings less pronounced. He is found in the Transition zone from British Columbia to San Francisco and breeds south to southern California. The Arctic towhee has a black head, back, neck and chest mixed with

olive gray, belly white, flanks reddish, wings and tail with heavy white markings. Breeds in Transition and upper Sonoran zones on the plains and eastern foothills of the Rocky Mts, and from Saskatchewan south to southern Colorado. Spurred towhee much like *articus* with colors darker with differences in bill and feet. Breeds in the Rocky Mts to California and from British Columbia to Lower California and northern Mexico. The San Clemente towhee is much like the spurred towhee but with tones of gray and dark brown. Found on San Clemente Island in southern California. The San Diego towhee deep glossy black and pure white, with some brownish on back. Found in the coast region of southern California south to Lower California. *The canyon* towhee wears a light rufous cap with back and sides plain grayish-brown, throat buffish and spotted. Found from western Texas to Arizona and from eastern Colorado to Sonora.

 The group of fuscus towhees, while chaparral birds, of the same general habits of the *maculatus* group, seem more like big fluffy brown sparrows than chewinks. *Crissalis* or the California towhee is dressed in dull grayish-brown with throat light rufous shading to white. Found in California west of Sierra Nevada, the Shasta region south to San Bernardino. The Anthony towhee is much like *crissalis* but smaller and duller in color. Found from southern California to Lower California. The Abert towhee is plain grayish-brown with darker head, under parts lighter. Breeds from Colorado to southeastern California, Arizona, and New Mexico. The green-tailed towhee has a bright rufous head, white throat, upper parts olive-gray becoming bright olive-green on wings and tail, under parts white. Breeds from the western edge of the plains to Coast Range in California, north to Montana, migrates to Lower and Central Mexico.

The green-tailed towhee is an individualist both in color and temperament. One would hardly recognize him as one of the genus. Not knowing it, one might take a guess that it was an over-grown warbler, or a cross between a yellow-breasted chat and a chipping sparrow. It is a bird of the upland sage and lupine spaces. The note that one would hear is a dainty mewling, but

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Seeds and insects are the principal foods of the towhees as a group. However, they also feed moderately on small fruits like berries, cherries, and even grapes.