

EYES AND NO EYES BOOK 4.

# BIRDS OF THE AIR



ARABELLA BUCKLEY

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EYES AND NO EYES  
VOL. 4

BIRDS OF THE AIR

BY

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

**W**E at Living Book Press are extremely proud to bring you this release of *Eyes and No Eyes*, originally published by Cassell.

Some of the old images were not of a high enough quality to reprint so we have included some of the black and white images from the original as well as many high quality photographs to accompany the text throughout.

Because this book represents a broad overview of the nature we will find around us the images may sometimes be of similar creatures and plants that are native to other regions than the United Kingdom where the story was first set. This is to help children appreciate that many animal and plant families share similar traits and can be found in many parts of the world, some may even be in their own backyard, as well as provide an opportunity for those who can't access the great outdoors to see nature up close.

We hope these new editions bring a lot of joy to your homes, and that they will help children everywhere take a deeper look at the natural world surrounding them.



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These lessons are intended to be read *after* the teacher has given one or more lectures on the subject. It is not necessary to read the book straight through. Different lessons are suited for different seasons, and in some cases one lesson may serve for a month's work; the children being encouraged to observe and collect.









CHAFFINCH (LEFT)

ROBIN

LESSON I.  
BIRDS WE KNOW.

**I** WONDER how many birds you know by sight, and what you could tell about their nests and their lives?

There are between three and four hundred different British birds, and very few people know them all. But in any one place there are not more common birds than you could learn in a year. You can look for the rare ones afterwards.

The best way to begin is to write down those you are sure about, and say how you recognise them. You cannot mistake a Robin, with his red breast, his plump little body, and his brown wings. The mother robin's breast is



GREEN WOODPECKER

not quite so red, and the young have no red at all. But when you have seen them with the cock-robin, you will soon know them by their shape.

But a Chaffinch has a red breast. How can you tell him from a robin? His breast is much browner than the robin's, and even at a distance you may know him by the white bands on his dark wings, and the yellow tips to some of his feathers. Then his body is longer, and he moves more gracefully than the robin, while his loud "*pink, pink*" if you go near his nest, will tell you at once what he is.

The Lark you know by his slender brown body and white speckled throat, and by the way he soars, as he sings his sweet song. The common green Woodpecker is easily known by his bright colours, his curious feet, and his stiff tail, which he uses to jerk himself up a tree. And though a Nuthatch also goes up a tree by jumps, you would never



take him for a woodpecker, for he is no bigger than a sparrow, and he has a short tail and blue-grey wings with a dingy red breast.

Then you know the cooing Wood-pigeon, the chattering Magpie, the soaring Hawk with his hooked beak, and the downy Owl. And I daresay you could tell me of many more.

The birds you know best will most of them be with us all the year round. But not all. The Swifts fly away to the south in August, and the Swallows and the Martins follow in October. When they are gone the Fieldfares come from the north, and feed in flocks on the worms in the damp fields, and on the holly berries when the ground is hard with frost.

The Swallow and the House Martin are so alike that, as they come and go together, you might not know them apart, unless you remember that a Swallow has a blue-

WOOD PIGEON



black collar across his breast, and that the fork of his tail is longer than that of the Martin (see p. 45). You may be busy all the year round watching the birds, seeing when they come and go, what food they eat, how they fly, whether they sing in the morning or evening, and where they build their nests.

Many farmers and gardeners shoot little birds because they eat their corn and peas and fruit. But a large number of birds feed chiefly on insects. You ought to know which these are, for they are very useful in clearing away earwigs and caterpillars, as well as slugs and snails. If you look out early some morning and see a Thrush tapping a snail-shell against a stone to get at the snail, you will say he is a good gardener. You will not grudge him a little fruit in the summer.

Then there are the nests and the young birds to watch. You need not take the nests, nor rob the birds of their eggs. You will learn much more by pulling back the leaves and the twigs, and peeping gently into the nest. For then you can come another day and watch when the eggs hatch, and how the young birds grow. If you are careful not to disturb the bush nor touch the eggs, the mother will not desert them. Last year a pair of Thrushes built their nest in a hedge by the side of a path where people were always passing. But though I went often to look at it, the mother brought up all her four little ones. She would even sit still on the nest when I peeped in, while her mate sang on a tree close by.

Point out and describe six birds common in the neighbourhood.



SONG THRUSH FEEDING ITS YOUNG

LESSON II.

THE SONG OF BIRDS.

**B**IRDS sing when they are happy, and cry out when they are frightened, just as children do. Only they have songs and cries of their own. You can always tell when the little song-birds are happy, for each one trills out his joyous notes as he sits on a branch of a tree, or the top of a hedge.

In the early mornings of the spring, you will hear singing in the garden almost before it is light. First there is a little chirping and twittering, as if the birds were saying “good-morning” and preparing their throats. Then, as the sun rises, there comes a burst of song.

Robins, Thrushes, Blackbirds, Chaffinches, and Wrens whistle away merrily, and many other little birds join in. While they are all singing together, it is not easy to tell one song from another, though the Thrush sings loudest and clearest of all.



#### YELLOWHAMMER SINGING

Then they fly away to their breakfast and, as the day goes on, you hear one or two at a time. So you can listen to the notes of each song, and if you go near very quietly, you can see the throat of the bird swelling and quivering as he works the little voice-chords inside, which make the notes.

It is not easy to write down what a bird sings, for it is like whistling—there are no words in it. But people often try to imitate their songs in words. Listen to the Thrush. You can fancy he says “cherry-tree, cherry-tree, cherry-tree” three times. Then, after some other notes, he sings “hurry-up, hurry-up,” and “go-it, go-it.” For the thrush has a great many notes.

The pretty Yellowhammer, with its bright yellow head, sings “*a little bit of bread, and no che-e-s-e.*” The Chiff-chaff calls “*chiff-chaff, chiff-chaff*” quite distinctly. Any child can imitate the cuckoo, or the coo-oo-oo of the wood-pigeon.

As the days grow hotter, the birds sing less. They sit

on the branches of the trees, or on the hedges under the shade of the leaves, or hop about in the wood.

Then when the evening comes, and long shadows creep over the grass, each bird looks out for his supper. When he is satisfied he sings his evening song of content, before he goes to sleep.

What a concert it is! Finches, tomtits, sparrows, wrens, robins, and chaffinches all singing at once. And above them all, come the song of the thrushes and blackbirds, the cooing of the wood-pigeon and the caw-caw of the rooks as they fly home from the fields. As the thrushes were the first to begin in the morning, except the lark, so they are the last to leave off at night, and often one thrush will go on long after all the others are quiet.

Then at last all seem to have settled down for the night. But no! If you live in Kent, or any part of the south or east of England, you may hear in May or June a sweet sound, like a flute, coming softly from many parts of the wood. This comes from the Nightingales, who, in the warm summer, will sing nearly all night.

They sing in the day as well, but their note is so soft that often you cannot hear it when the more noisy birds are singing. In the still night you can hear the sweet song rising up six notes and then bubbling like a flute played in water. When you have once heard a nightingale sing you will never forget it. In Yorkshire or Devonshire you will not hear him, for he does not go so far to the North or to the West.

Birds sing most in the spring, for then they are making



their nests, and the father bird sings to the mother while she is building, and when she is sitting on the eggs. You may often find out where a Robin's nest is hidden by seeing the cock-robin sitting on a branch singing to his mate. Most people too, have seen the Wood-pigeon puffing out his throat and cooing and bowing to the mother bird on her nest. For pigeons make love all the year round.

When the mother bird is sitting, the father sings for joy, and when the young birds are hatched he teaches them his song. Song-birds have very delicate throats. They have muscles, which quiver like the strings of a violin, and the young birds have to learn to work these muscles.

It is curious to hear a young Blackbird or Thrush beginning to try a tune. First he sounds one note, then two or three. They are not always in tune, but he tries again and again. So little by little he learns his father's song.

Listen to the song of birds—robins, thrushes, blackbirds, larks, nightingales, bullfinches and others, and try to imitate them by whistling.

#### RED WINGED BLACKBIRD

