Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius Phoeniceus*

Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater* (Cow Blackbird, Cow Bunting, Cow-pen Bird, Cow Troopial, Cowtroopial)
Common Grackle *Quiscalus quiscula* (Crow Blackbird)
Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*
Rusty Blackbird *Euphagus carolinus*

October 5, Sunday: I noticed on Friday Oct 3d th at the Willows generally were green & unchanged. The red-maples varied from green through yellow to bright red. The black-cherry was green inclining to yellow.
(I speak of such trees as I chanced to see) The apple trees green but shedding their leaves like most of the trees Elm a dingy yellow. White ash from green to dark purple or Mulberry White-oak green inclining to yellow Tupelo reddish yellow & red– Tree bushed about the head, limbs small & slanting downward.

Some maples when ripe are yellow or whitish yellow –others reddish yellow –others bright red –by the accident of the season or position –the more or less light & sun –being on the edge or in the midst of the wood– Just as the fruits are more or less deeply colored.

Birches green & yellow. Swamp white oak a yellowish green– Black ash – greenish yellow & now sered by frost– Bass sered yellowish.

Color in the maturity of foliage is as variable & little characteristic as naturalists have found it to be for distinguishing fishes & quadrupeds &c.

Observed that the wood-chuck has two or more holes –a rod or two apart– One or the front door –where the excavated sand is heaped up– another not so easily discovered –very small round without any sand about it being that by which he emerged– smaller directly at the surface than beneath – on the principle by which a well is dug making as small a hole as possible at the surface to prevent caving. About these holes is now seen their manure apparently composed chiefly of the remains of crickets which are seen crawling over the sand.

Saw a very fat woodchuck on a wall – evidently prepared to go into winter quarters.

Still purplish asters – & late golden rods – & fragrant life everlasting – & purple gerardia – great Bidens &c &c The Dogwood by the Corner road has lost every leaf – its bunches of dry greenish berries hanging straight down from the bare stout twigs as if their peduncles were broken. It has assumed its winter aspect. A Mithridatic look

The Prinos berries are quite red.

The panicled hawkweed is one of those yellowish spherical or hemispherical fuzzy seeded plants –which you see about the wood-paths & fields at present– which however only a strong wind can blow far.–

Saw by the path-side beyond the Conant Spring that singular jelly like sort of Mushroom –which I saw last spring while surveying Whites farm– now red globular ¾ inch in diameter, covering the coarse moss by the ruts on the path side with jelly-covered seeds(?)

2 P M to the high open land between Batemans’ Pond & the lime kiln.

It is a still cloudy afternoon rather cool As I go past Cheney’s Boathouse –the river looks lighter than the sky– The butternuts have shed nearly all their leaves, and their nuts are seen black against the sky. The White oaks are turned a reddish brown in some valleys. The Norway cinquefoil and a smaller cinquefoil are still in blossom & also the late buttercup My companion remarked that the land (for the most part consisting of decayed orchards – huckleberry pastures and forests) on both sides of the Old Carlisle road, uneven and undulating like the road appeared to be all in-motion like the traveller – travelling on with him. Found a wild russet apple very good – of peculiar form flattened at the poles. Some red maples have entirely lost their leaves– The black birch is straw colored.

The rocks in the high open pasture are peculiar & interesting to walk over – for though presenting broad & flat surfaces – the strata are perpendicular producing a grained & curled appearance – this rocky crown like a hoary head covered with curly hair – or it is like walking over the edges of the leaves of a vast book. I wonder how these rocks were ever worn even thus smooth by the elements. The strata are remarkably serpentine or waving. It appears as if you were upon the axis of elevation geologically speaking. I do not remember any other pasture in Concord where the rocks are so remarkable for this.

What is that fleshy or knot-fleshy root which we found in the soil on the rocks by Bateman’s pond – which looked so edible? All meadows and swamps have been remarkably dry this year & are still notwithstanding the few showers and rainy days. Witch hazel now in bloom I perceive the fragrance of ripe grapes in the air, and after a little search discover the ground covered with them where the frost has stripped the vines of leaves – still fresh & plump & perfectly ripe. The little conical burrs of the agrimony stick to my clothes. The pale lobelia still blooms freshly– The rough hawkweed – holds up its globes of yellowish fuzzy seeds as well as the panicled. The clouds have cleared away the sun come out & it is warmer & very pleasant. The declining sun falling on the willows &c below Mrs Ripleys & on the water –produces a rare soft light– such as I do not often see– a greenish yellow. The milk weed seeds are in the air. I see one in the river – which a minnow occasionally jostles. (stood near a small rabbit hardly half grown by the old carlisle road) I hear the red wing black-birds
[Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*] by the river side again as if it were a new spring.

They appear to have come to bid farewell. The birds appear to depart with the coming of the frosts which kill the vegetation & directly or indirectly the insects on which they feed. The American bittern *Ardea Minor* [American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*] flew across the river trailing his legs in the water scared up by us– This according to Peabody is the boomer– [stake driver] In their sluggish flight they can hardly keep their legs up. Wonder if they can soar

8 Pm to Cliffs: Moon 3/4 full.¹ The nights now are very still for there is hardly any noise of birds or of insects. The whipporwill [Whip-Poor-Will *Caprimulgus Vociferus*] is not heard –nor the mosquito– only the occasional lisping of some sparrow. The moon gives not a creamy but white cold light – through which you can see far distinctly. About villages You hear the bark of dogs instead of the howl of wolves– When I descend into the valley by Wheelers grain field I find it quite cold. The sand slopes in the deep Cut gleam coldly as if covered with rime. As I go through the Spring woods I perceive a sweet dry scent from the underwoods like that of the fragrant life everlasting. I suppose it is that. To appreciate the moonlight you must stand in the shade & see where a few rods or a few feet distant it falls in between the trees. It is a “milder day” made for some inhabitants whom you do not see. The fairies are a quiet gentle folk invented plainly to inhabit the moonlight. I frequently see a light on the ground within thick & dark woods – where all around is in shadow & haste forward expecting to find some decayed & phosphorescent stump – but find it to be some clear moon light that falls in between some crevice in the leaves. As moonlight is to sunlight so are the fairies to men

Standing on the Cliffs no sound comes up from the woods. The earth has gradually turned more northward – the birds have fled south after the sun– & this impresses me as well by day or by night as a deserted country – there is a down-like mist over the river and pond – and there are no bright reflections of the moon or sheeniness from the pond in consequence – all the light being absorbed by the low fog.

April 22. It still rains. The water is over the road at Flints Bridge–and, as I am told, has been for some time over the J. Miles road in the corner– & near the further stone Bridge. So that there is now only the Boston

¹ The full moon would be on the night of the 8th.
2. Bradley P. Dean says that Henry Thoreau combined this with a reference to Mark 8:36 in the construction of his early lecture “What Shall It Profit” paragraph number 73:

When our life ceases to be inward and private, conversation degenerates into mere gossip. I rarely meet a man who can tell me any news which he has not read in a newspaper, and for the most part the only difference between me and my fellow is that he has seen the paper and I have not. But the London Times is not one of the Muses. When a man’s inward life fails he begins to go more constantly to the post office, and despatches couriers to the other side of the globe; and so again he gains the whole world and loses his
May 7, Friday: 4:30 A.M. – To Cliffs.

Has been a dew, which wets the feet, and I see a very thin fog over the low ground, the first fog, which must be owing to the warm weather. Heard a robin singing powerfully an hour ago, and song sparrows, and the cocks. No peeping frogs in the morning, or rarely.

The toads sing (?), but not as at evening. I walk half a mile (to Hubbard’s Pool in the road), before I reach those I heard,—only two or three. The sound is uttered so low and over water; still it is wonderful that it should be heard so far. The traveller rarely perceives when he comes near the source of it, nor when he is farthest away from it. Like the will-o’-the-wisp, it will lead one a long chase over the fields and meadows to find one. They dream more or less at all hours now. I see the relation to the frogs in the throat of many a man. The full throat has relation to the distended paunch.

I would fain see the sun as a moon, more weird. The sun now rises in a rosaceous amber. Methinks the birds sing more some mornings than others, when I cannot see the reason. I smell the damp path, and derive vigor from the earthy scent between Potter’s and Hayden’s. Beginning, I may say, with robins [**American Robin** *Turdus migratorius*], song sparrows [**Melospiza melodia**], chip-birds, bluebirds [**Eastern Bluebird** *Sialia sialis*], etc., I walked through larks [**Eastern Meadowlark** *Sturnella magna*], pewees [**Wood Pewee** *Contopus virens*], pigeon woodpeckers [**Yellow-shafted Flicker** *Colaptes auratus*], chickadees [**Black-capped Chickadee** *Poecile atricapillus*] tull-a-tulls, to towhees, huckleberry-birds, wood thrushes [**Catharus* mustardella*], brown thrasher [**Brown Thrasher** *Toxostroma rufum*], jay [**Blue Jay** *Cyanocitta cristata*], catbird [**Gray Catbird** *Dumetella carolinensis*], etc., etc. Entered a cool stratum of air beyond Hayden’s after the warmth of yesterday. The *Viola pedata* still in bud only, and the other (*q.v.*) Hear the first partridge [**Ruffed Grouse** *Bonasa umbellus* (*Partridge*)] drum. The first oven-bird [**Seiurus aurocapillus**]. A wood thrush which I thought a dozen rods off was only two or three, to my surprise, and betrayed himself by moving, like a large sparrow with ruffled feathers, and quirking his tail like a pewee, on a low branch. [The 1906 journal editor notes here that probably the bird was a hermit thrush, this motion of the tail being almost a proof positive, adding that probably, too, all the “wood thrushes” seen by Thoreau in April (see *ante*) were hermits.] Blackbirds [**Red-winged Blackbird** *Agelaius phoenicus*] are seen going over the woods with a chattering bound to some meadow.

A rich bluish mist now divides the vales in the eastern horizon mile after mile. (I am ascending Fair Haven.) An oval-leaved pyrola (evergreen) in Brown’s pines on Fair Haven.

Cliffs. — This is the gray morning: the sun risen; a very thin mist on the landscape; the falling water smooth. Far below, a screaming jay seen flying, against the bare stems of the pines. The young oaks on the plain, the pines standing here and there, the walls in Conantum pastures seen in the sun, the little groves on the opposite side of the river lit up by it while I am in shade, these are memorable and belong to the hour.

Here at this hour the brown thrasher [**Brown Thrasher** *Toxostroma rufum*] often drowns the other birds. The towhee [**Rufous-Sided Towhee** *Pipilo Erythrophthalmus*] has been a main bird for regular morning singing in the woods for a little while. The creeper [**Pine Warbler** *Dendroica pinus* or **Brown Creeper** *Certhia americana* or **Black-and-white Warbler** *Mniotilta varia*] is regularly heard, too. Found the first strawberry blossoms (**Fragaria Virginiana**) on Fair Haven. The sedge grass blossom is now quite large and showy on the dry hillside where the wood has recently been cut off.

I think that birds vary their notes considerably with the seasons. When I hear a bird singing, I cannot think of any words that will imitate it. What word can stand in place of a bird’s note? You would have to bury (?) it or surround it with a *chevaux de frise* of accents, and exhaust the art of the musical composer besides with your different bars, to represent it, and finally get a bird to sing it, to perform it. It has so little relation to words. The wood thrush [**Catharus mustardella**] says ah-tully-tally for one strain. There appear to be one or more little warblers in the woods this morning which are new to the season, about which I am in doubt, myrtle-birds

The wood thrush

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[Yellow-rumped Warbler] *Dendroica coronata* among them. For now, before the leaves, they begin to
people the trees in this warm weather. The first wave of summer from the south. The purple finch (sober-
colored) [Purple Finch] *Carpodacus purpureus* is a rich singer. As I said the other day, something like the
warbling vireo [Warbling Vireo] *Vireo gilvus*, only louder, clearer, mellower, and more various. Bank
swallows at Hayden’s. I fear that the dream of the toads will not sound so musical now that I know whence it proceeds. But I will not
fear to know. They will awaken new and more glorious music for me as I advance, still farther in the horizon, not to be traced to toads and frogs in slimy pools.

P.M. — To Nawshawntuck.
The vireo comes with warm weather, midwife to the leaves of the elm.... The first small pewee [Wood 
Pewee] *Contopus virens* sings now *che-vet*, or rather chirrups *chevet*, *tche-vet* – a rather delicate bird with
a large head and two white wing bars. The first summer yellowbirds [Yellow Warbler] *Dendroica petechia*
on the willow causeway. The birds I have lately mentioned come not singly, as the earliest, but all at once, i.e.
many yellowbirds all over town. Now I remember the yellowbird comes when the willows begin to leave out.
(And the small pewee [Wood Pewee] *Contopus virens* on the willows also.) So yellow. They bring summer
with them and the sun, *tche-tche-tche-tcha-tcha-tchar*. Also they haunt the oaks, white and swamp white, where
are not leaves. On the hill I sit in the shadow of the locust trunks and branches, for want of other shade. Thus is
a mistake in Nature, to make shade necessary before she has expanded the leaves.
The catnip is now up, with a lustrous purple tinge to the under side of its leaves. (Why should so many leaves
be so painted on the under side, concealed from men’s eye – only not from the insects– as much as the sculptures
on the tops of columns?) There is something in its fragrance as soothing as balm to a sick man. It advances me
ever to the autumn and beyond it. [Low full of reminiscence is any fragrance! If it were not for virtuous, brave,
generous actions, could there be any sweet fragrance?

“Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.”

Now you may say the trees generally are *beginning* to leave out, excepting the oaks, celtis, late water willow,
etc., etc. But only the willows and the balm-of-gileads make any show in our landscape yet, — of native or wild
trees, — the latter where they grow in clumps. Its catkins are five inches long.

Top of hill. — The haze is remarkably thick to-day as if all the distant western woods were on fire. (The wind
west and what coolness in it most grateful.) The haze makes the western view, quite rich, so many edges of
woodland ridges where you see the pine tops against, the white mist of the vale beyond. I count five or six such
ridges rising partly above the mist, but successively more indistinct, the first only a quarter of a mile off. Of
course there are mountains. It belongs to this warm weather. The lower part of the sky is white, like a fog;
only in the zenith do I see any blue. It makes the outlines of the blue water on the meadow eastward agreeably
indistinct, being more nearly the color of the water itself than the land. A maple swamp in bloom, westward
from this hill, is a rich sight, even like a rosy orchard in bloom. The dust flies.

I am not sure whether my first violet was the *cucullata or ovata*, [*I am not sure whether* and “cucullata or
have been crossed out in pencil] or the same with that minute one which I found prepared to blossom by the
Spring Path this morning. A fern, one of the osmundas, beyond the celtis, one foot high, covered with reddish
wool, unfolding its blossom (?) as it rises. The wool used for birds’ nests. Might be used for other purposes? It
is such weather as in summer we expect a thunder-shower after.

Is this smoke-like haze produced by the warm west wind meeting the still cool earth? Or is it smoke? The
ground under the walnuts is richly strewn with nutshells, broken and gnawed by squirrels, like an unswept
dining-hall in early times. That little early violet close to the ground in dry fields and hillsides, which only
children’s eyes detect, with buds showing purple but lying so low, as if stooping to rise, or rather its stems
actually bent to hide its head amid the leaves, quite unpretending. The *gnaphalium*, though without scent, is
also a singular and rarely heard scream or screech. They fly with lark-like wings. We require just so much acid
or blacks and golden or coppery irides. The hop-hornbeam is almost in bloom. The red-wing’s
Catbird] *Dumetella carolinensis* does not make the corn-planting sounds. The toads dream loudly these
first warm clays. A yellow-throated green frog in the river, by the hemlocks, — bright silk-green the fore part of
the body, tiger-striped legs. The eyes of toads and frogs are remarkably bright and handsome, — oval pupils
(?) or blacks and golden or coppery irides. The hop-hornbeam is almost in bloom. The red-wing’s
[Agelaius phoeniceus] shoulder, seen in a favorable light, throws all epaulets into the shade. It is General
Abercrombie. methinks, when they wheel partly with the red to me. The crow blackbirds [Common
Grackle] *Quiscalus quiscula* make a noise like crows [American Crow] *Corvus brachyrhynchos*, and also
a singular and rarely heard scream or screech. They fly with lark-like wings. We require just so much acid
as the cranberries afford in the spring. The first bumblebee, that prince of hummers, — *bombyle*, [sic], looking
now over the ground as if he could find something. He follows after flowers. To have your existence depend on
THOREAU’S RED-WING

flowers, like the bees ant] hummingbirds! The willow twigs now may make wreaths so pretty and graceful with their expanding leaves. They afford the only chaplets yet, fit to crown the fairest. The horse-chestnuts in the yards have opened their parasol-like leaves to-day, reminding me of tropical palms; and the rock maples’ large buds are almost open. Such a haze as this makes a dark night.

July 4, Sunday: 3 Am. To Conantum,– to see the lilies open– I hear an occasional crowing of cocks in distant barns as has been their habit for how many thousand years. It was so when I was young; and it will be so when I am old– I hear the croak of a tree toad as I am crossing the yard– I am surprised to find the dawn so far advanced. There is a yellowish segment of light in the east paling a star –&d sensibly to the light of the waning & now declining moon. There is very little dew on the uplands. I hear a little twitting & some clear singing from the siringo & the song sparrow [Melospiza melodia] –as I go along the Back Road –and now and then the note of a bull frog from the river– The light in the east has acquired a reddish tinge near the horizon Small wisps of cloud are already fuscous & dark seen against the light as in the W at evening. It being Sunday morning I hear no early stirring farmer driving over a bridge– The crickets are not remarkably loud at this season– The sound of a whipporwill is wafted from the woods– Now on the Corner Road the hedges are alive with twittering sparrows—a blue bird [Eastern Bluebird Sialia sialis] or two &c. The day light now balances the moonlight. How short the nights. The last traces of day have not disappeared much before 10 o’clock or perchance 9 1/2 and before 3 Am you see them again in the East. (probably 2 1/2) leaving about 5 hours of solid night– The sun so soon coming round again. The robins [American Robin Turdus migratorius] sing—but not so loud & long as in the spring– I have not been awakened by them lately in the mornings– Is it my fault—ah! those mornings when you are awakened in the dawn by the singing the matins of the birds. I hear the dumping sound of frogs now on the causeway. Some small clouds in the east are reddish fuscous. There is no fog on the river nor in the meadows. The king-bird twitters? on the Black willows. Methinks I saw the not yet extinguished lights of one or two fireflies in the darker ruts in the grass in Conant’s meadow. The moon yields to the sun—the pales even in the presence of his dawn. It is chiefly the spring birds that I hear at this hour—and in each dawn the spire is thus revived. The notes of the sparrows & the blue-birds [Eastern Bluebird Sialis sialis] & the robin [American Robin Turdus migratorius] have a prominence now which they have not by day. The light is more & more general & some low bars begin to look bluish as well reddish. (Elsewhere the sky wholly clear of clouds)

The dawn is at this stage far lighter than the brightest moonlight I write by it —yet the sun will not rise for some time. Those bars are reddening more above one spot. They grow purplish or lilac rather. White & whiter grows the light in the eastern sky— (And now descending to the Cliff by the river side I cannot see the low horizon & its phenomena) I love to go through these old apple orchards so irregularly set out. Sometimes two trees standing alone together— The rows of grafted fruit will never tempt me to wander amid them like these A bittern leaves the shore at my approach— I suppose it is he whose excrement has whitened the rocks—as if a mason had spilled his whitewash— A night hawk squeaks & booms—before sunrise. The insects shaped like shad flies (some which I see are larger & yellowish) begin to leave their cases (and selves?) on the stems of the grasses & the rushes in the water. I find them so weak they can hardly hold on. I hear the blackbirds’ carqueree & the king-fisher darts away with his alarum— & outstretched neck. Every lily is shut –Sunrise—I see it gilden the top of the hill behind me but the sun itself is concealed by the hills & woods on the E shore. a very slight fog begins to rise now in one place on the river. There is something serenely glorious & memorable to me in the sight of the first cool sun light now gilding the eastern extremity of the bushy island in Fair Haven that wild lake the subdued light—& the repose remind me of Hades. In such sunlight there is no air—it is such an innocent pale yellow as the spring flowers It is the pollen of the sun—fertilizing plants. The color of the earliest spring flowers is as cool and innocent as the first rays of the sun in the morning falling on woods & hills. The fog not only rises up ward (about 2 feet) but at once there is a motion from the sun over the surface— What means this endless motion of water bugs collected in little groups on the surface—and ceaselessly circling about their centre—(as if they were a family hatched from the eggs on the under side of a pad.) Is not this motion intended partly to balk the fishes? Methinks they did not begin to move till sun rise—where were they? And now I see an army of skaters advancing in loose array—of chasseurs—or scouts as Indian allies are drawn in old books— Now the rays of the sun have reached my seat a few feet above the water—flies begin to buzz—mosquitoes to be less troublesome. A humming bird hums by over the pads up the river as if looking like myself to see if lilies have blossomed (The birds begin to sing generally—& if not loudest at least most noticeably on account of the quietness of the hour—just before a few minutes before sun rise—They do not sing so incessantly & earnestly as...
a regular thing half an hour later). Carefully looking both up & down the river I could perceive that the lilies began to open about 15 minutes after the sun from over the opposite bank fell on them—which was perhaps 3/4 of an hour after sun rise (which is about 4 1/2) and one was fully expanded about 20 minutes later—When I returned over the bridge about 6 1/4 there were perhaps a dozen open ones in sight. It was very difficult to find one not injured by insects—even the buds which were just about to expand were frequently bored quite through—and the water had rotted them. You must be on hand early to anticipate insects. (One thimbleberry which will be quite ripe by tomorrow Indigo almost expanded. I perceive the meadow fragrance on the causeway. Bobolinks still.

I bring home a dozen perfect lily buds—all I can find within many rods—which have never yet opened—I prepare a large pan of water—I cut their stems quite short—I turn back their calyx leaves with my finger, so that they may float upright—I touch the points of their petals—& breathe or blow on them & toss them in. They spring open rapidly or gradually expand in the course of an hour—all but one or two—

At 12 1/2 Pm I perceive that the lilies in the river have begun to shut up The water has gone down so much that I can stand on the shore and pluck as many as I want and they are the fairest ones—concealed by the pickerel weed often the whole plant high & dry. I go again to the river at 2 1/2 PM & every lily is shut.

I will here tell the history of my rosaceous lilies plucked the 1st of July. They were buds at the bottom of a pitcher of water all the 2nd (having been kept in my hat part of the day before) On the morning of the third I assisted their opening & put them in water as I have described—but they did not shut up at noon like those in the river but at dark—their petals at least quite tight & close—They all opened again in the course of the forenoon of the 4th but had not shut up at 10 o’clock Pm—though I found them shut in the morning of the 5th. May it be that they can bear only a certain amount of light—and these being in the shade remained open longer—(I think not for they shut up in the river that quite cloudy day July 1st) or is their vitality too little to permit to perform their regular functions— Can that meadow fragrance come from the purple summits of the eupatorium? I look down on the river behind Dod’s at 2 1/2 PM a slate colored stream with a scarcely perceptible current with a male & female shore—the former more abrupt of button bushes & willows—the other flat of grass & pickerel weed alone. Beyond the former the water being deep extends a border or fringe of green and purplish pads lying perfectly flat on the surface—but on the latter side the pads extend a half a rod or a rod beyond the pickerel weed—shining pads reflecting the light dotted with white or yellow lilies This sort of ruff does the river wear & so the land is graduated off to water. A tender place in nature—an exposed vein—and nature making a feint to bridge it quite over with a paddy film—with red-wing black birds [Red-winged Blackbird Agelaius phoeniceus] liquidly warbling & whistling on the willows & king-birds on the elms & oaks. These pads, if there is any wind rippling with the water—& helping to smooth and allay it. It looks tender & exposed as if it were naturally subterranean—and now with these sheilds of pads—held scale-like by long threads from the bottom—she makes a feint to bridge it—So floats the musketaquid over its segment of the sphere. Methinks there is not even a lily—white or yellow in Walden.

I see perfectly formed pouts by the shore of the river one inch long. The great spatterdock lily is a rich yellow at a little distance & seen lying on its great pads it is an indispensable evidence of the fertility of the river. The gratiola begins to yellow the mud by the river-side. The Lysimachia lanceolata var. hybrida is out in the meadows

The Rosa nitida? appears to be now out of bloom.

March 21: Morning along the river.
The air full of song sparrows,—*swedit swedit swedit* and then a rapid jingle or trill, holding up its head without fear of me, the innocent, humble bird, or one pursuing another through the alders by the waterside. Why are the early birds found most along the water? These song sparrows are now first heard commonly. The black-birds [Red-winged Blackbird Agelaius phoeniceus], too, create some melody. And the bluebirds, how sweet their warble in the soft air, heard over the water! The robin is heard further off, and seen flying rapidly, hurriedly through the orchard.... I thank the red-wing for a little bustle and commotion which he makes, trying to people the fields again.... The earth is uninhabited but fair to inhabit, like the old Carlisle road. Is then the road so rough
that it should be neglected? Not only narrow but rough is the way that leadeth to life everlasting. Our experience does not wear upon us. It is seen to be fabulous or symbolical, and the future is worth expecting. Encouraged, I set out once more to climb the mountain of the earth, for my steps are symbolical steps, and in all my walking I have not reached the top of the earth yet....

May 14:... Passing Conantum under sail at 10 o’clock, the cows in this pasture are already chewing the cud in the thin shade of the apple trees, a picture of peace, already enjoying the luxury of their green pastures. I was not prepared to find the season so far advanced. The breeze which comes over the water, sensibly cooled or freshened by it, is already grateful. Suddenly there start up from the riverside at the entrance of Fair Haven Pond, scared by our sail, two great blue herons [Great Blue Heron Ardea herodias], —slate-color rather, —slowly flapping and undulating, their projecting breast-bones very visible, —or is it possibly their necks bent back? — their legs stuck out straight behind. Getting higher by their flight, they straight come back to reconnoitre us. Land at Lee’s Cliff, where the herons have preceded us and are perched on the oaks, conspicuous from afar, and again we have a fair view of their flight. 

... The still dead-looking willows and button-bushes are alive with red-wings, [Red-winged Blackbird Agelaius phoeniceus] now perched on a yielding twig, now pursuing a female swiftly over the meadow, now darting across the stream. No two have epaulets equally brilliant. Some are small and almost white, and others a brilliant vermillion. They are handsomer than the golden robin, methinks. The yellowbird, kingbird, and pewee, beside many swallows, are also seen. But the rich colors and the rich and varied notes of the blackbirds surpass them all....

... Again we scare up the herons, who, methinks, will build hereabouts. They were standing by the waterside. And again they alight farther below, and we see their light-colored heads erect, and their bodies at various angles as they stoop to drink. And again they flap away with their great slate-blue wings, necks curled up (?) and legs straight out behind, and having attained a great elevation, they circle back over our heads, now seemingly black as crows against the sky, —crows with long wings they might be taken for, —but higher and higher they mount by stages in the sky, till heads and tails are lost and they are mere black wavelets amid the blue, one always following close behind the other. They are evidently mated. It would be worth the while if we could see them oftener in our sky....
May 20. The 18th and 19th a rather gentle and warm May storm, — more rain, methinks, than we have had before: this spring at one time. Began with thunder-showers on the night of the 18th, the flashing van of the storm, followed by the long, dripping main body, with, at very long intervals, an occasional firing or skirmishing in the rear or on the flanks.

6 A.M. — To Island by river. Probably a red-wing [Red-winged Blackbird, Agelaius phoeniceus] blackbird’s nest, of grass, hung between two button-bushes; whitish eggs with irregular black marks. Sarsaparilla (Aralia nudicaulis), probably two days. White oak, swamp white, and chestnut oak probably will open by the 22d. The white ashes are in full flower now, and how long?

8 A.M. — To Flint's Pond. Cornus Canadensis just out. Probably the C. florid should be set down to-day, since it just begins to shed pollen and its involucre is more open. It is a fair but cool and windy day, a strong northwest wind, and the grass, to which the rain has given such a start, conspicuously waves, showing its lighter under side, and the buttercups toss in the wind. The pitch and white pines have grown from one to five inches. On Pine Hill. — In this clear morning light and a strong wind from the northwest, the mountains in the horizon, seen against some low, thin clouds in the background, look darker and more like earth than usual; you distinguish forest and pasture on them. This in the clear. Cool atmosphere in the morning after a rain-storm, with the wind northwest. They will grow more ethereal, melting into the sky, as the day advances.

The beech is already one of the most densely clothed trees, or rather makes a great show of verdure from the size of its fully expanded light-green leaves, though some are later. The fresh shoots on low branches are five or six inches long. It is an interesting tree to me, with its neat, close, tight-looking bark, like the dress which athletes wear, its bare instep, and roots beginning to branch like bird’s feet, showing how it is planted and holds by the ground. Not merely stuck in the ground like a stick. It gives the beholder the same pleasure that it does to see the timbers of a house above and around. Do they blossom here? I found nuts, but apparently not sound, at Haverhill the other day, — last year's. There are some slender, perfectly horizontal limbs which go zigzagging, as it were creeping through the air, only two or three feet above the ground, over the side-hill, as if they corresponded to concealed rills in the ground beneath.

Plenty of arums now in bloom. Probably my earliest one was in bloom, for I did not look within it. What is that pretty, transparent moss in the brooks, which holds the rain or dewdrops so beautifully on the under sides of the leaflets, through which they sparkle crystallinely? Fresh checkerberry shoots now. The cedars are full of yellowish cedar apples and minute berries just formed, the effete staminiferous blossom still on. When did they begin to bloom? I find none of the rare hedyotis yet on Bare Hill. The peach bloom is now gone and the apple blossom still. The wind makes such a din in the woods that the notes of birds are lost, and added to this is the sound of the waves of Flint's Pond breaking on the shore, - the fresh surf. The pond is spotted with whitecaps, five or six feet long by one foot, like a thin flock of sheep running toward the southeast shore. The smallest lakes can be lashed into a sort of fury by the wind, and are quite ocean-like then. These caps are a striving to dilute the water with air.

The barberry will probably blossom to-day.

Here, by the side of the pond, a fire has recently run through the young woods on the hillside. It is surprising how clean it has swept the ground, only the very lowest and dampest rotten leaves remaining, but uvularias and srnilacinas have pushed up here and there conspicuously on the black ground, a foot high. At first you do not observe the full effect of the fire, walling amid the bare dead or dying trees, which wear a perfect winter aspect, which, as trees generally are not yet fully leaved out and you are still used to this, you do not notice, till you look up and see the still green tops everywhere above the height of fifteen feet.Yet the trees do not bear many marks of fire commonly; they are but little blackened, except where the fire has run a few feet up a birch, or paused at a dry stump, or a young evergreen has been killed and reddened by it and is now dropping a shower of red leaves. Hemlock will blossom to-morrow. The geranium is just out, and the lady's-slipper. Some with old seed-vessels are still seen.

Hear again, what I have heard for a week or more sometimes, that rasping, springy note, a very hoarse chirp, — ooh, twee twee twee, — from a bluish bird as big as a bluebird, with some bright yellow about head, white beneath and lateral tail-feathers, and black cheeks (?). This and that sort of brown-creeper-like bird -of May 12 and the chickadee-like bird (which may be the chickadee), and the ah te ter twee of deep pine woods (which also may be the chickadee), I have not identified.

Arbor vitae has been out some time and the butternut some days. Mountain-ash on the 18th. Larch apparently
ten days. Nemopanthes several days. The swamp blueberry abundantly out.
Saw a tanager in Sleepy Hollow. It most takes the eye of any bird. You here have the red-wing reversed, - the deepest scarlet of the red-wing spread over the whole body, not on the wing-coverts merely, while the wings are black. It flies through the green foliage as if it would ignite the leaves.
Of deciduous trees and shrubs, the latest to leaf out, as I find by observation to-day, must be the panicled andromeda, rhodora, and button-bush. In some places, however, the first has perfectly formed leaves, the rhodora at most not half unfolded, the button-bush for the most part just bursting buds. But I have not seen the prinos and perhaps one or two other shrubs. I have no doubt that the button-bush may be called the latest of all. Is that female ash by river at Lee's Hill a new kind? In bloom fully May 18th.
Even this remote forest, which stands so far away and innocent, has this terrible foe Fire to fear. Lightning may ignite a dead tree or the dry leaves, and in a few minutes a green forest be blackened and killed. This liability to accident from which no part of nature is exempt.
Plucked to-day a bunch of Viola pedata, consisting of four divisions or offshoots around a central or fifth root, all united and about one inch in diameter at the ground and four inches at top.

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<th>Flowers</th>
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And perhaps more buds would still make their appearance, and undoubtedly half a dozen more would have blown the next day. Forming a complex, close little testudo of violet scales above their leaves.

April 3. Saw from window with glass seven ducks on meadow-water, — only one or two conspicuously white, — these, black heads, white throats and breasts and along sides, — the rest of the ducks, brownish, probably young males and females. Probably the golden-eye. Jardine says it is rare to see more than one full-plumaged male in a flock.

Did I see crow blackbirds with the red-wings [Red-winged Blackbird Agelaius phoeniceus] and hear their harsher chattering?
The water has gone down so much that I have to steer carefully to avoid the thick hummocks loft here and there on the meadow by the ice. I see the deep holes they were taken out of. A muskrat has just built a small cabin, — apparently a bushel of mouthfuls on one. No clams up yet. I see a very little snow ice still, at a distance on the north sides of hills and walls. The wind is southeasterly. This is methinks the first hazy day, though not so warm as the 17th of Mardi. The aspect of the woods reminds me of landscapes, and the sough of the wind in the pines sounds warmer, whispering of summer. I think I may say that Flint’s broke up entirely on the first wet (lay after the cold spell, — i.e. the 31st of March, — though I have not been there lately. Fair Haven will last some days yet.

April 10: April rain. How sure a rain is to bring the tree sparrows into the yard, to sing sweetly, canary-like!
I bought me a spy-glass some weeks since. I buy but few things, and those not till long after I begin to want
them, so that when I do get them I am prepared to make a perfect use of them and extract their whole sweet. I bought me a spy-glass some weeks since. I buy but few things, and those not till long after I begin to want them, so that when I do get them I am prepared to make a perfect use of them and extract their whole sweet. Saw a dead sucker yesterday.

P. M. - To Great Meadows by boat, and sail back. There are many snipes now feeding in the meadows, which you come close upon, and then they go off with hoarse cr-r-r-rack cr-r-r-rack. They dive down suddenly from a considerable height sometimes when they alight. A boy fired at a blue-winged teal a week ago. A great many red-wings [Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*] along the water's edge in the meadow. Some of these blackbirds quite black, and some apparently larger than the rest. Are they all red-wings? The crimson stigmas, like the hazel, of the white maple, generally by themselves, make handsome show.

April 14. Friday, 6 A.M. — To Nawshawtuct. There is a general tinge of green now discernible through the russet on the bared meadows and the hills, the green blades just peeping forth amid the withered ones. Can they be red-wings which I have seen for some time with the red-wings [Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*], — without red or buff? They have a split note, perhaps no gurgle-ee! There are spider-webs on the meadow lately bared. It is difficult to find the snipe, though you stand near where he alights. Saw yellow redpolls, on Cheney's elm, — a clear metallic chip and jerks of the tail.

April 18. For three or four days the lilac buds have looked green, — the most advanced that I have seen. The earliest gooseberry still earlier in garden (though smaller buds).

P. M. — To stone-heaps by boat. Scared up snipes on the meadow’s edge, which go off with their strange zigzag, crazy flight and a distressed sound, — cr-aik cr-aik or cr-r-rack cr-r-rack. One booms now at 3 P.M. They circle round and round, and zigzag high over the meadow, and finally alight again, descending abruptly from that height. Was surprised to see a wagtail thrush, the golden-crowned, [Vide April 26. Probably hermit thrush.] at the Assabet Spring, which inquisitively followed me along the shore over the snow, hopping quite near. I should say this was the golden-crowned thrush without doubt, though I saw none of the gold, if this and several more which I saw bad not kept close to the water. May possibly be the *aquaticus*. Have a jerk of the forked tail. The male yellow redpoll's breast and under parts are of a peculiarly splendid and lively yellow, — glowing. It is remarkable that they too are found about willows, etc., along the water. Saw another warbler [Vide April 25.] about in the same localities, — somewhat creeper-like, very restless, more like the Tennessee warbler than any, methinks. Light-slate or bluish-slate head and shoulders, yellowish backward, all white beneath, and a distinct white spot on the wing; a harsh grating note (?) Saw two wood ducks probably; saw a white spot behind eyes; they went off with a shriller cr-aik than the black ducks. I now feel pretty sure that they were crow blackbirds which I saw April 3d with the red-wings [Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*]. They are stout fellows without any red epaulet, and go off with a hoarser chuck chuck, with rounded tail. They make that split singing, and, with the red-wing, feed along the water’s edge. Heard a red-wing sing his bobylee in new wise, as if he tossed up a fourpence and it rattled on some counter in the air as it went up. Saw to-day a lesser blackbird, size of cowbird, slaty-black, on meadow edge. What was it? The snow is sprinkled along the street with the large scales of buds from the trees; thus revealing; what kind of fall is going on at this season.

April 23. A kingfisher with his crack, — cr-r-r-rack. Rain Yesterday and to-day; yet this morning the robin sings and the blackbirds and, in the yard, the tree sparrow, hyemalis, and song sparrow. A rain is sure to
bring the tree-sparrow and hyemalis to the gardens. I suppose it must be the seeds of weeds which they are so busily picking from the bare ground, which their sharp eyes detect. George Minott says that he used to shoot the red-headed woodpecker, and found their nests on the trees on his hillside. He used to steal up to the pigeon woodpeckers’ holes and clap his hand over them and take out the old bird; then let her go. The first April showers are even fuller of promise and a certain moist serenity than the sunny days. How thickly the green blades are starting up amid the russet! The tinge of green is gradually increasing in the face of the russet earth. Now that the very earliest shrubs are beginning to unfold, — spirea, gooseberry, honeysuckle vine, lilac, Missouri currant, — many herbaceous plants, not evergreen merely, make quite a show, as the skunk-cabbage in favorable places, nuphar in the most favorable places though muddy yellow and dilapidated, callitriche and the narrow tooth-leaved water plant, etc., etc., cowslip, cOLUMbine (cress and chrysosplenium, — are not both chiefly evergreen?), celandine, catnep, saxifrage, dandelion, clover, golden senecio, sweet flag, hellebore (the most forward buds begin to open), thistle, shepherd’s-purse, meadow saxifrage, elder probably.

As for the birds, I have this to remark: The crows still frequent the meadows. The lark sings morning and evening. The blackbirds — red-wing [Red-winged Blackbird] and crow — have since their arrival kept up their bobylee and chattering and split notes on the willows and maples by the river and along the meadow’s edge. They appear to depend much (as well as crows and robins) on the meadow, just left bare, for their food. They are the noisiest birds yet. Both still fly in flocks, though the male red-wings have begun to chase the females. Robins still frequent the meadows in flocks and sing in the rain. The song sparrows not in such flocks nor singing so tumultuously along the watercourses in the morning as in the last half of March. how wary they are! They will dodge you for half an hour behind a wall or a twig, and only a stone will make them start, looking every which way in a minute. So the blackbirds, both kinds, side, till they bring a twig between me and them. The flock of black ducks which stayed by so long is now reduced to a quarter part their number. Before the 4th or 5th of April the F. hyemalis was apparently the most abundant bird of any, in great drifting flocks with their lively jingle, their light-colored bill against slate breasts; then, on the advent of warmer weather, the greater part departed. Have the fox sparrows gone also? I have not seen them of late. As for hawks, after the one or two larger (perhaps) hen-hawks in the winter and a smaller one in December (?), the first were large marsh (?) hawks on trees on the meadow edge or skimming along it, since which the eagle, the sharp-shinned, and the smaller brown and white-rumped over meadows, which may be the same, etc., etc. Have seen the black duck, golden-eye, Merganser, blue(?)-winged teal, wood duck. The golden-eye seems to have gone. Heard a nuthatch yesterday, April 22d. The tree sparrows are the prevailing bird on ground, and most numerous of any for the past month except one while the hyemalis. They are a chubby little bird with a clear chestnut crown, a dark spot on the otherwise clear whitish breast, and two light bars on the wings. The pigeon woodpecker now scolds long and loud morning and evening. The snipes are still feeding on the meadows. The turtle dove darts solitary about as if lost, or it had lost its mate. The yellow redpoll, with a faint clear chip, is the commonest yellow bird on hills, etc., about water. The chip sparrow does not sing much in morning yet. New kinds of warblers have begun to come within a few days. I saw yesterday the smoke of the first burning of brush which I have noticed, though the leaves cannot be very dry yet.

P.M. — To Lee’s Cliff on foot.

It has cleared up. At Ivy Bridge I see the honeybees entering the crypts of the skunk-cabbage, whose tips have been bitten by the frost and cold. The first sweet-gale, which opened a day or two ago on the sunny sides of the brooks where the sun reached it above the bank, was an interesting sight, full of amber dust. Those are blossom, not leaf buds, so forward on the shad-bush. The myrtle-bird, — yellow-rumped warbler, — was not this warbler c of the 20th? — on the willows, alders, and the wall by Hubbard’s Bridge, slate and white spotted with yellow. Its note is a fine, rapid, somewhat hissing or whistling se se se se ser riddler se, somewhat like the common yellowbird’s. The yellow redpolls [Palm Warbler] are very common on the willows and alders and in the road near the bridge. They keep jerking their tails. I heard one male sing a jingle like che ve ve ve ve, very fast, and accenting the last syllable. They are quite tame. I sit awhile on the lee side of Conant’s Wood, in the sun, amid the dry oak leaves, and hear from time, to time the fine ringing note of a pine warbler, which I do not see. It reminds me of former days and indescribable things. Swarms of those little fuzzy gnats now make a faint humming about the railing of the bridge. The bay-wing has a light ring at some distance around the eye. It is also too dark for my prisoner of the 15th.

Saw my white-headed eagle [Bald Eagle] again, first at the same place, the outlet of Fair Haven Pond. It was a fine sight, he is mainly — i.e. his wings and body — so black against the sky, and they contrast so strongly with his white head and tail. He was first flying low over the water; then rose gradually and circled westward toward White Pond. Lying on the ground with my glass, I could watch him easily and by turns he gave me all possible views of himself when I observed him edgewise I noticed that the tips of his wings curved upward slightly the more, like a stereotyped undulation.
He rose very high at last, till I almost lost him in the clouds circling or rather looping along westward, high over the river and wood and farm, effectually concealed in the sky.

We who live this plodding life here below never know how many eagles fly over us. They are concealed in the empyrean I think I have got the worth of my glass now that it has revealed to me the white-headed eagle. Now I see him edgewise like a black ripple in the air, his white head still as ever turned to earth and now he turns his under side to me, and I behold the full breadth of his broad black wings, somewhat ragged at the edges....

May 16, 1854: Looked into several red-wing [Red-winged Blackbird \textit{\textcolor{red}{Agelaius phoeniceus}}] blackbirds’ nests which are now being built, but no eggs yet. They are generally hung between two twigs, say of button-bush. I noticed at one nest what looked like a tow string securely tied about a twig at each end about six inches apart, left loose in the middle. It was not a string, but I think a strip of milkweed pod, etc., – water asclepias probably,– maybe a foot long and very strong. How remarkable that this bird should have found out the strength of this, which I was so slow to find out!

April 30. Horse-chestnut begins to leaf, — one of them.

Another, more still, cloudy, almost drizzling day, in which, is the last three, I wear a greatcoat.

P.M. — To Lee’s Cliff.

Privet begins to leaf. (\textit{Viburnum nudum} and \textit{Lentago} yesterday).

I observed yesterday that the barn swallows confined themselves to one, place, about fifteen rods in diameter, in Willow Bay, about the sharp rock. They kept circling about and flying up the stream (the wind easterly), about six inches above the water, — it was cloudy and almost raining, — yet I could not perceive arty insects ii1cre. Those myriads of little fuzzy gnats mentioned on the 21st and 28th must afford an abundance of food to insectivorous birds. 1!hany new birds should have arrived about the 21st. There were plenty of myrtle-birds and yellow redpolls where the gnats were. The swallows were confined to this space when I passed up, and were still there when I returned, an hour and a half later. I saw them nowhere else. They uttered only a slight twitter from time to time and when they turned out for each other on meeting. Getting their meal seemed to be made a social affair. Pray, how long will they continue to circle thus without resting?

The early willow by Hubbard’s Bridge has not begun to leaf. This would make it a different species from that by railroad, which has.

Hear a short, rasping note, somewhat tweeter — birdlike, I think from a yellow redpoll. Yellow dorbug.

I hear from far the scream of a hawk circling over the Holden woods and swamp. This accounts for those two men with guns just entering it. What a dry, shrill, angry scream! I see the bird with my glass resting upon the topmost plume of a tall white pine. Its back, reflecting the light, looks white in patches; and now it circles again. It is a red-tailed hawk. The tips of its wings are curved upward as it sails. How it scolds at the men beneath! I see its open bill. It must have a nest there. Hark! there goes a gun, and down it tumbles from a rod or two above the wood. So I thought, but was mistaken. In the meanwhile, I learn that there is a nest there, and the gunners killed one this morning, which I examined. They are now getting the young. Above it was brown, but not at all reddish-brown except about head. Above perhaps I should call it brown, and a dirty white beneath; wings above thickly barred with darker, and also wings beneath. The tail of twelve reddish feathers, once black-barred near the end. The feet pale-yellow and very stout, with strong, sharp black claws. The head and neck were remarkably stout, and the beak short and curved from the base. Powerful neck and legs. The claws pricked me
as I handled it. It measured one yard and three eighths plus from tip to tip, i.e. four feet and two inches. Some ferruginous on the neck; ends of wings nearly black.

Columbine just out; one anther sheds. Also turritis will to-morrow apparently; many probably, if they had not been eaten. Crowfoot and saxifrage are now in prime at Lee’s; they yellow and whiten the ground. I see a great many little piles of dirt made by the worms on Conantum pastures.

The woodchuck has not so much what I should call a musky scent, but exactly that peculiar rank scent which I perceive in a menagerie. The musky at length becomes the regular wild-beast scent.

Red-wing blackbirds [Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*] now fly in large flocks, covering the tops of trees — willows, maples, apples, or oaks — like a black fruit, and keep up an incessant gurgling and whistling, — all for some purpose; what is it. White pines now show the effects of last year’s drought in our yard and on the Cliffs, the needles faded and turning red to in alarming extent. I now see many *Juniperus repens* berries of a handsome light blue above, being still green beneath, with three hoary pouting lips. The Garfields had found a burrow of young foxes. How old? [Saw the old and tracks of young; thinks they may be one month old.] I see the black feathers of a blackbird by the Miles Swamp side, and this single bright-scarlet one shows that it belonged to a red-wing, which some hawk or quadruped devoured.

May 7 5 A.M. — to Island.

Finger-cold & windy. The sweet-flags showed themselves about in the pads. Hear Maryland yellowthroat. Many grackles still in flocks singing on trees, male and female, the latter a very dark or black ash, but with silvery eye. I suspect the red-wings [Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*] are building. Large white maples began to leaf yesterday at least, generally; one now shows considerably across the river. The aspen is earlier. *Viburnum dentatum* yesterday leafed. Bass to-morrow (some shoots sheltered now).

A crow’s nest near the top of a pitch pine about 20 feet high, just completed, betrayed by the bird’s cawing & alarm — as on the 5th one came and sat on a bare oak within 30 40 feet, cawed reconnoitred & then both flew off to a distance while I discovered & climbed to the nest within a dozen rods.

One comes near to spy you first. It was about 16 inches over — of the p. pine dead twigs laid across the forks — & white oak leas & bark fibres laid copiously on them — the cavity deep & more than half covered & concealed with a roof of leaves — a long sloping approach or declivity left on one side the nest.

Red currant out.

P.M. to Lee’s Cliff via Hubbard’s Bath.

*Viola euculata* apparently a day or two. A ladybug and bumblebee, the last probably some time. A lily wholly above water, and yellow, in Skull-Cap Meadow, ready to open. [On the 12th I observed it sunk beneath the water.] See *Rana fontinalis*.

Climbed to 2 crows nests or — maybe one of them a squirrel’s — in Hub’s grove. Do they not some times use a squirrel’s nest for a foundation? A Ruby-crested wren is ap. attracted & eyes me. It is wrenching & fatiguing as well as dirty work to climb a tall pine with nothing or maybe only dead twigs & stubs to hold by. You must proceed with great deliberation & see well where you put your hands & your feet. Saw prob. a female *F. Fusca* sail swift & low close by me — and alighted on a rail fence — It was a rich very dark perhaps reddish slate brown — I saw some white under the head — no white on rump — wings thickly barred with dark beneath. It then flew & alighted on a maple. Did Not fly so irregularly as the last one I called by this name. The early willow on the left beyond the bridge has begun to leaf, but by no means yet the one on the right. Scared up 2 gray squirrels in the Holden wood which ran glibly up the tallest trees on the opposite side to me & leaped across from the extremity of the branches to the next trees & so on very fast ahead of me — Remembering — aye aching with — my experience in climbing trees this Pm & morning I could not but admire their exploits. — To see them travelling with so much swiftness & ease that road over which I climbed a few feet with such painful exertion!

A partridge [Ruffed Grouse *Bonasa umbellus* (Partridge)] flew up from within 3 or 4 feet of me with a loud
whir & betrayed one cream colored egg in a little hollow amid the leaves.

Hear the tweezer-bird. It looks like a bluish slate above, with a greenish(?)-yellow back and bright orange-yellow throat and breast, forked tail, two white bars on wings, whitish vent. Another, probably female, paler bluish, with fainter yellow and a conspicuous black crescent on breast. This is undoubtedly the parti-colored warbler, i.e. Brewer’s blue yellow-back (*Sylvia Amercicana* of Latham and Audubon, *pusilla* of Wilson). Vide June 18th, 1854 and May 9th, 1853. I believe the yellow-rumped warbler has a note somewhat like the tweezer’s.

Climbed a hemlock to a very large & complete prob. gray squirrel’s nest — 18 inch diameter — a foundation of twigs — on which a body of leaves — & some bark fibers lined with the last — and the whole covered with many fresh green hemlock twigs 1 foot or more long with the leaves on — which had been gnawed off — & many strewed the ground beneath having fallen off — Entrance one side.

A short dist. beyond this & the hawks-nest pine — I observed a mid sized red oak standing a little aslant on the side-hill of over the swamp — with a pretty large hole in one side about 15 feet from the ground where ap. a limb on which a felled tree lodged had been cut some years before & so broke out a cavity — I thought that such a hole was too good a one not to be improved by some inhabitant of the wood — Perhaps the gray squirrels I had just seen had their nest there — or was not the entrance big enough to admit a screech owl [Eastern Screech-Owl *Otus asio*].

So I thought I would tap on it & put my ear to the trunk — & see if I could hear anything stirring within it but I heard nothing. Then I concluded to look into it — So I shinned up — & when I reached up one hand to the hole to pull myself up by it the thought passed through my mind perhaps something may take hold of my fingers — but nothing did — The first limb was on the nearly directly opposite to the hole — & resting on this I looked in — & to my great surprise there squatted filling the hole which was about 6 inches deep & 5 to 6 wide — a salmon-brown bird not so big as a partridge — seemingly asleep within 3 inches of the top & rath close to my face — It was a minute or two before I made it out to be an owl — It was a salmon brown or fawn(?) above — the feathers shafted with small blackish brown somewhat hastate (?) marks —

greyish toward the ends of the wings & tail as far as I could see.

A large white circular space about or behind eye banded in rear by a pretty broad 1/3 of an inch & quite conspicuous perpendicular dark brown stripe. Egret, say 1 1/4 or 1 1/2 inches long sharp triangular reddish brown without mainly. It lay crowded in that small space — with its tail somewhat bent up — & one side of its head turned up with one egret — & its large dark eye open only by a long slit about 1/16 of an inch wide — visible breathing — After a little while I put in one hand and stroked it repeatedly whereupon it reclined its head a little lower & closed its eye entirely. Though curious to know what was under it I disturbed it no farther at that time.

In the mean while the crows were making a great cawing amid & over the pine-tops beyond the swamp — & at intervals I heard the scream of a hawk, prob — the surviving male hen hawk, whom they were pestering (unless they had discovered the male screech owl) & a part of them came cawing about me. This was a very fit place for hawks & owls to dwell in the thick wood just over a white spruce swamp — in which the glaucous kalmia grows — The grey squirrels — partridges — hawks — & owls all together — It was prob. these screech owls which I heard in moon light nights hereabouts last fall. Vide end of this day.

Birch leafs to-day; probably some yesterday, with white maple. The Conantum thorn (cocks spur?) leaves with
earliest. That little red-stemmed (?) moss has now yellow-green oval fruit hanging densely in the sod. Sweet-briar shoots two Indies long; this one of the earlier roses to leaf. Put it with early rose. The Rubus triflorus up two inches or more. Put it next after raspberry for present. Polygonatum pubescens at Lee’s, in three or four days. Amelanchier Botryapium on rocks, partly open; will probably shed pollen to-morrow. The long, narrow unfolded flower-buds, rose-pink without, are very pretty with the dark-purple leaves, — prettier than the open ones, — like little cigarettes, to compare fair with foul. The dark-purple fruit-like fascicles of the staminate flowers of the ash on the rocks are now very remarkable, about the size of pignuts, and looking somewhat like them against the sky on the perfectly bare tree, or like dry alder scales or cones; will shed pollen in a clay or two. Oftener one pedicelled anther and stamen than two together in the very minute calyx, — if it is one. Young bass from seed an inch high, the two leaves remarkably cut.

Returning by owl’s nest about 1 hour before sunset — I climbed up and looked in again. The owl was gone but there were 4 nearly quite warm round dirty brownish white eggs [MacGillivray describes no eggs of this color, — only white, — and the same with Nuttall, except the great gray owl. (EDITORIAL NOTE: Screech owl’s eggs, when clean, are always white.], quite warm — on nothing but the bits of rotten wood which made the bottom of the hole — The eggs were very nearly as large at one end as the other — slightly oblong 1 3/8 inches by 1 2/8 as nearly as I could measure. It would prob. have hatched within a week the young being consid feathered & the bill remarkably developed. Perhaps she heard me coming & so left the nest. My bird corresponds in color, as far as I saw it, with Wilson’s Strix asio, but not his nœvia, which Nuttal and others consider a young (?) bird, though the egg was not pure white. I do not remember that my bird was barred or mottled at all. [Vide the 12th.]

Nuttall says, Little Screech-Owl: Greenland to Florida — chiefly prey on mice — also small birds beetles, crickets, &c — nests in May & June. & lined with &c &c eggs 4 to 6 —; several bluebirds, black birds, and song sparrows in one. In cloudy weather come out earlier. Wilson’s thrush attacked one. Note in autumn, “hoo, hoo hoo hoo hoo hoo, proceeding from high and clear to a low guttural shake or trill.”

Was not that an owl’s feather which I found 1/2 mile beyond, downy more than half, and with base and separate white points beyond a dark band at the end?

Was not mine a bird of last year? — But MacGillivray says of owls that the young dif. very little from the old “the older the individ. becomes, the more simple is the coloring; the dark markings diminish in extent, and the finer mottlings are gradually obliterated.” Rhus Toxicodendron under rocks leaves.

May 13. P.M. — Down river and to Yellow Birch Swamp. Yesterday was the first warm day for a week or two, and to-day it is much warmer still and hazy — as much like summer as it can be without the trees being generally leafed. I saw a Fringilla hyemalis this morning and heard the golden robin, now that the elms are beginning to leaf, also the myrtle-bird’s tealee. The earliest gooseberry in garden has opened.

As we float down the river through the still and hazy air, enjoying the June-like warmth, see the first kingbirds on the bare black willows with their broad white breasts and white-tipped tails; and the sound of the first bobolink as floated to us from over the meadows; now that the meadows are lit by the tender yellow green of the willows and the silvery-green fruit of the elms. I heard from a female red-wing [Red-winged Blackbird Agelaius phoeniceus] that peculiar rich screwing warble — not a gurgle ee — made with r, not with l. The whole air too is filled with the ring of toads louder than heretofore. Some men are already fishing, indistinctly seen through the haze. Under the hop-hornbeam below the monument, observed a large pellet, apparently dropped by some bird of prey, consisting of mouse-hair, with an oat or two in it undigested, which probably the mouse had swallowed. This reminded me that I had read this kind of birds digested the flesh of the animals they swallowed, but not the vegetable food in the stomachs of the latter. The air is filled with the song of birds, — warbling vireo, gold robin, yellowbirds, and occasionally the bobolink. The gold robin, just come, is heard in all parts of the village. I see both male and female. It is a remarkable difference between this day and yesterday, that yesterday this and the bobolink were not heard and now the former, at least, is so musical and omnipresent. Even see boys a-bathing, though they must find it cold. I saw yesterday some of that common orange rust-like fungus already on a Potentilla simplex leaf. Hear the first catbird, more clear and tinkling than

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“Stack of the Artist of Kouoro” Project
Only a part of the yellow birches are leafing, but not yet generally the large ones. I notice no catkins. One white birch sheds pollen. The white birches on the side of Ponkwasset are beginning to show faint streaks of yellowish green here and there.

A cooler and stronger wind from the east by midafternoon.

The large bass trees now begin to leaf.

Now, about two hours before sunset, the brown thrashers are particularly musical. One seems to be contending in song with another. The chewink’s strain sounds quite humble in comparison.

At 9.30 P.M. I hear from our gate my night-warbler. Never heard it in the village before.

I doubt if we shall at any season hear more birds singing than now. [This sentence is queried in the margin.]

Saw an amelanchier with downy leaf (apparently *oblongifolia*) on the southeast edge of Yellow Birch Swamp, about eighteen feet high and five or six inches in diameter, — a clump of them about as big as an apple tree.

May 18. P.M. — Boat to Nut Meadow.

Large devil’s-needle. Sassafras well open. How long? Celtis will probably shed pollen to-morrow; shoots already an inch long. Sorrel pollen. First very strain. Green-briar leafed several days. *Veronica serpyllifolia* well out (how long?) at Ash Bank Spring. Saw the yellow-legs feeding on shore. (C[harl]anning, now thinks he has not seen it before.) Legs not bright-yellow. Goes off with the usual whistle; also utters a long monotonous call as it were [sic] standing on the shore, not so whistling. Am inclined to think it the lesser yellow-legs (though I think the only one we see). Yet its bill appears quite two inches long. Is it curved up? Observed a blackbird’s (red-wing’s) nest finished. (Four eggs in it on the 25th.) [Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*] At Clamshell a bay-wing [Vesper Sparrow *Poecetes gramineus*] sparrow’s nest, four eggs (young half hatched) - some black-spotted, others not. [Three young partly (slightly) fledged the 26th.] These last warmer days a great many fishes dart away from close to the shore, where they seem to lie now more than ever. I see some darting about and rippling the water there with large back fins out, either pouts or suckers (not pickerel certainly). Apparently their breeding-season arrived. Is not this where the fish hawks get them? Rhodora; probably some yesterday. Black scrub oak pollen. Fir balsam pollen; say begins to leaf at same time. The clump of golden willows west of new stone bridge is very handsome now seen from hill, with its light-yellowish foliage, because the stems of the trees are seen through it.

May 25. A rather warm night the last; window slightly open. Hear buzz of flies in the sultryish morning air on awaking.

8 A.M. — To Hill.

Late rose shoots, two inches, say a fortnight since. *Salix nigra* pollen, a day at least. Wood pewee. Apparently yellowbirds’ nests just completed-one by stone bridge causeway, [One egg in it the next morning. Also a red-wing’s nest opposite Dodd’s (one egg in it next morning, i.e. 26th),] another on birch by mud turtle meadow. Veronica peregrina in Mackay’s strawberries, how long? Most of the robins’ nests I have examined this year had three eggs, clear bluish green.

A chip-bird’s nest on a balm-of-Gilead, eight feet High, between the main stem and a twig or two, with four very pale blue-green eggs with a sort of circle of brown-black spots about larger end.

Red-wing’s [Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*] nest with four eggs — white, very faintly tinged with (perhaps) green and curiously and neatly marked with brown-black spots and lines on the large end. Red-wings now generally beginning to lay....

June 11. How’s morus, staminate flowers apparently only a day or two (pollen); the pistillate a long time. The locust apparently two or three days open.

When I would go a visiting I find that I go off the fashionable street — not being inclined to change my dress — to where man meets man & not polished shoe meets shoe.
Agelaius

Agelaius phoeniceus

THOREAU’S RED-WING

What a difference between one red-wing blackbird’s egg and another’s! C. finds one long as a robin’s, but shorter, with a large black spot on the side. Both pale-blue ground.

Now (Sep 16th 55) after 4 or 5 months of invalidity & worthlessness I begin to feel some stirrings of life in me & pears & I depart with my secrets untold. His are not the apples that tempt me.

Red-winged Blackbird

The early willows at the bridge are apparently either S. discolor or eriocephala, or both. I have noticed the green oak-balls some days. Now observe the dark evergreen of June. The target leaf is eaten above.

In order to get the deserted tanager’s nest at the top of a pitch pine which was too weak to climb, we carried a rope in our pockets and took three rails a quarter of a mile into the woods, and there rigged a derrick, by which I climbed to a level with the nest, and I could see if there were eggs in it. I have the nest. Tied the three tops together and spread the bottoms.

Carex cephalophora (?) on Heywood’s Peak. That fine, dry, wiry wild grass in hollows in woods and sprout-lands, never mown, is apparently the C. Pennsylvanica, or early sedge. There are young bluebirds.

July 8. A northeasterly storm. A great part of beach bodily removed and a rock five feet high exposed — before invisible — opposite lighthouse. The blackthroated bunting common among the shrubbery. Its note much like the Maryland yellow-throat’s, — wittychee te tchea, tche te tchea, tche. [Cape Cod, p. 131; Riv. 156.]

The Corema Conradii, broom crowberry, is quite common at edge of higher bank just south of the lighthouse. It is now full of small green fruit, small pinhead size. It spreads from a centre, raying out and rooting every four or five inches. It forms peculiar handsome-shaped mounds, four or five feet in diameter by nine inches or a foot high, very soft springy beds to lie on, — a woodman’s bed already spread. [Cape Cod, p. 167; Riv. 200.] I am surprised at the number of large light-colored toads everywhere hopping over these dry and sandy fields. Went over to Bay side. That pond at Pond Village three eighths of a mile long and densely filled with cat-tail flag seven feet high. Many red-wing blackbirds [Red-winged Blackbird, Agelaius phoeniceus] in it. Small says there are two kinds of cat-tail there, one the barrel flag for coopers, the other shorter for chairs; he used to dig them. [Cape Cod, p. 142; Riv. 169.]

See the killdeer a dozen rods off in pasture, anxious about its eggs or young, with its shrill squeaking note, its ring of white about its neck and two black crescents on breast. They are not so common and noisy as in June. A milkweed out some days.

Hudsonia tomentosa, the downy, still lingering, and ericoides even yet up to 17th. The last is perhaps the most common.

Euphorbia polygonifolia, seaside spurge, small and flat on pure sand. Didn’t notice flower. Lemma minor, duckweed, duck-meat, covering the surface at the pond, — scale-like. See a nighthawk at 8 A.M., sitting lengthwise on a rail. Asked Small if a quarter of the fuel of North Truro was driftwood. He thought it was, beside some lumber. None of the Mya arenaria on back side, but a small thicker-shelled clam, Mesodesma arctata, with a golden-yellow epidermis, very common on the flats, which S. said was good to eat. The shells washed up were commonly perforated; could dig them with your hands. [Cape Cod, p. 110; Riv. 130.]

S. said that nineteen small yellow birds (probably goldfinches) were found dead under the light in the spring
early. [Cape Cod, p. 170; Riv. 204.]

Nov. 14. Minott hears geese to-day.
Heard to-day in my chamber, about 11 A.M., a singular sharp crackling sound by the window, which made me think of the snapping of an insect (with its wings, or striking something). It was produced by one of three small pitch pine cones which I gathered on the 7th, and which lay in the sun on the window-sill. I noticed a slight motion in the scales at the apex, when suddenly, with a louder crackling, it burst, or the scales separated, with a snapping sound on all sides of it. It was a general and sudden bursting or expanding of all the scales with a sharp crackling sound and motion of the whole cone, as by a force pent up within it. I suppose the strain only needed to be relieved in one point for the whole to go off.

I was remarking to-day to Mr. Rice on the pleasantness of this November thus far, when he remarked that he remembered a similar season fifty-four years ago, and he remembered it because on the 13th of November that year he was engaged in pulling turnips and saw wild geese go over, when one came to tell him that his father was killed by a bridge giving way when his team was crossing it, and the team falling on him walking at its side.

P. M. — Up Assabet with Sophia.
A clear, bright, warm afternoon. A painted tortoise swimming under water and a wood tortoise out on the bank. The rain has raised the river an additional foot or more, and it is creeping over the meadows. My boat is two thirds full and hard to come at. The old weedy margin is covered and a new grassy one acquired. The current is stronger, though the surface is pretty smooth. Much small rubbish is drifting down and slowly turning in the eddies. The motion of my boat sends an undulation to the shore, which rustles the dry sedge half immersed there, as if a tortoise were tumbling through it. Leaves and sticks and billets of wood come floating down in middle of the full, still stream, turning round in the eddies, and I mistake them for ducks at first. See two red-wing blackbirds [Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*] alight on a black willow.

December 29: Down railroad to Andromeda Ponds.
I occasionally see a small snowflake in the air against the woods. It is quite cold, and a serious storm seems to be beginning. Just before reaching the Cut I see a shrike [Northern Shrike *Lanius excubitor*] flying low beneath the level of the railroad, which rises and alights on the topmost twig of an elm within four or five rods. All ash or bluish-slate above down to middle of wings; dirty-white breast, and a broad black mark through eyes on side of head; primaries (?) black, and some white appears when it flies. Most distinctive its small hooked bill (upper mandible). It makes no sound, but flies to the top of an oak further off. Probably a male.
Am surprised to find eight or ten acres of Walden still open, notwithstanding the cold of the 26th, 27th, and 28th and of to-day. It must be owing to the wind partly. If quite cold, it will probably freeze to-night. [Not quite. Say the night of the 30th.]

I find in the andromeda bushes in the Andromeda Ponds a great many nests apparently of the red-wing (?) [Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*] [Yes.] suspended after their fashion amid the twigs of the andromeda, each now filled with ice. I count twenty-one within fifteen rods of a centre, and have no doubt there are a hundred in that large swamp, for I only looked about the edge part way. It is remarkable that I do not remember to have seen flocks of these birds there. It is an admirable place for them, these swamps are so impassable and the andromeda so dense. It would seem that they steal away to breed here, are not noisy here as along the river.

I never knew, or rather do not remember, the crust so strong [and] hard as it is now and has been for three days. You can skate over it as on ice in any direction. I see the tracks of skaters on all the roads, and they seem hardly to prefer the ice. Above Abiel Wheeler’s, on the back road, the crust is not broken yet, though many sleds and sleighs have passed. The tracks of the skaters are as conspicuous [as] my there. But the snow is knit two or three inches deep. Jonas Potter tells me that [he] has known the crust on snow two feet deep to be as strong as this, so that he could drive his sled anywhere over the walls; so that he cut off the trees in Jenny’s lot three feet from the ground, and cut again after the snow was melted. When two men, Billings and Prichard, were dividing the stock of my father and Hurd, the former acting for Father, P. was rather tight for Hurd. They came to a cracked bowl, at which P. hesitated and asked, “Well, what shall we do with this? “B. took it in haste and broke it, and, presenting him one piece, said, “There, that is your half and this is ours.”

A good time to walk in swamps, there being ice but no snow to speak of, -all crust. It is a good walk along the edge of the river, the wild side, amid the button-bushes and willows. The eupatorium stalks still stand there,
with their brown hemispheres of little twigs, orreries.

The nests of last page are suspended very securely between eight or ten andromeda stems, about halfway up them; made of more or less coarse grass or sedge without, then about half an inch of dense and fine, now frozen sphagnum, then fine wild grass or sedge very regularly, and sometimes another layer of sphagnum and above these, the whole an inch thick, the bottom commonly rounded. The outside grasses are well twisted about whatever andromeda stems stand at or near the river. I saw the traces of mice in some of them.

April 3.... I see small flocks of robins running on the bared portions of the meadow. Hear the sprayey tinkle of the song sparrow along the hedges. Hear also, squeaking notes of in advancing flock of red-wings [Red-winged Blackbird \textit{Agelaius phoeniceus}], [or grackles; am uncertain which makes that squeak] somewhere high in the sky. At length detect them high overhead, advancing northeast in loose array, with a broad extended front, competing with each other, winging their way to some northern meadow which they remember.

The note of some is like the squeaking of many signs, while others accompany them with a steady dry \textit{tchuck}, \textit{tchuck}. Hosmer is overhauling a vast heap of manure in the rear of his barn, turning the ice within it up to the light; yet he asks despairingly what life is for, and says he does not expect to stay here long. But I have just come from reading Columella, who describes the same kind of spring work, in that to him new spring of the world, with hope, and I suggest to be brave and hopeful with nature. Human life may be transitory and full of trouble, but the perennial mind, whose survey extends from that spring to this, from Columella to Hosmer, is superior to change. I will identify myself with that which did not die with Columella and will not die with Hosmer....

April 5.... P.M. — To North River at Tarbell’s.
Fair weather again. Saw half a dozen blackbirds, uttering that sign-like note, on the top of Cheney’s elm, but
noticed no red at this distance. Were they grackles? Hear after some red-wings [Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*] sing bob-o-lee. Do these ever make the sign-like note? Is not theirs a fine shrill whistle?...

April 9. Wednesday. Another fine day.
7 A.M. — To Trillium Woods.
Air full of birds. The line I have measured west of railroad is now just bare of snow, though a broad and deep bank of it lies between that line and the railroad. East of railroad has been bare some time. The line in Trillium Woods is apparently just bare also. There is just about us much snow in these woods now as in the meadows and fields around generally; i.e., it is confined to the coldest sides, as in them. There is not so much as on the east side of Lee’s Hill. It is toward the north and east sides of the wood. Hence, apparently, in a level wood of this character the snow lies no longer than in adjacent fields divided by fences, etc., or even without them. The air is full of birds, and as I go down the causeway, I distinguish the seringo note. You have only to come forth each morning to be surely advertised of each newcomer into these broad meadows. Many a larger animal might be concealed, but a cunning ear detects the arrival of each new species of bird. These birds give evidence that they prefer the fields of New England to all other climes, deserting for them the warm and fertile south. Here is their paradise. It is here they express the most happiness by song and action. Though these spring mornings may often be frosty and rude, they are exactly tempered to their constitutions, and call forth the sweetest strains.
The yellow birch sap has flowed abundantly, probably before the white birch.

8 A.M. — By boat to *V. palmata* (Muhlenbergii) Swamp for white birch sap.
... A few rods off I hear some sparrows busily scratching the floor of the swamp, uttering a faint tseep tseep and from time to time a sweet strain. It is probably the fox-colored sparrow [Fox Sparrow *Passerella iliaca*]. These always feed thus, I think, in woody swamps, a flock of them rapidly advancing, flying before one another, through the swamp....
P.M. — Up railroad. A very warm day.
When I return to my boat, I see the snow-fleas like powder, in patches on the surface of the smooth water, amid the twigs and leaves. I had paddled far into the swamp amid the willows and maples. The flood has reached and upset, and is floating off the chopper’s corded wood. Little did he think of this thief. It is quite hazy to-day. The red-wing’s o’gurgle-ee-e [Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*] is in singular harmony with the sound and impression of the lapsing stream or the smooth, swelling flood beneath his perch. He gives expression to the flood. The water reaches far in amid the trees on which he sits, and they seem like a water-organ played on by the flood. The sound rises up through their pipes. There was no wind, and the water was perfectly smooth, — a Sabbath stillness till 11 A.M. We have had scarcely any wind for a month. ... While I am looking at the hazel, I hear from the old locality, the edge of the great pines and oaks in the swamp by the railroad, the note of the pine warbler [Pine Warbler *Dendroica pinus*]. It sounds far off and faint, but, coming out and sitting on the iron rail, I am surprised to see it within three or four rods, on the upper part of a white oak, where it is busily catching insects, hopping along toward the extremities of the limbs, and looking off on all sides, twice darting off like a wood pewee, two rods, over the railroad, after an insect and returning to the oak, and from time to time uttering its simple, rapidly iterated, cool-sounding notes. When heard a little within the wood, as he hops to that side of the oak, they sound particularly cool and inspiring, like a part of the evergreen forest itself, the trickling of the sap. Its bright-yellow or golden throat, etc., are conspicuous at this season, a greenish yellow above, with two white bars on its bluish-brown wings. It sits often with loose-hung wings and forked tail.

April 17.... P. M. — Start for Comantum in boat, wind southwest. I can hide my oars and sail up there and come back another clay. A moist, muggy afternoon, rain-threatening, true April weather, after a particularly warm and pleasant forenoon. The meadows are still well covered, and I cut off the bends. The red-wing [Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*] goes over with his che-e-e che-e-e, chatter, chatter, chatter. On
Hubbard’s great meadow I hear the sound of some fowl, perhaps a loon, rushing through the water, over by Dennis’s Hill, and push for it. Meanwhile it grows more and more rain-threatening, — all the air moist and muggy, a great ill-defined cloud darkening all the west, — but I push on till I feel the first drops, knowing that the wind will take me back again. Now I hear ducks rise, and know by their hoarse quacking that they are black ones, and see two going off as if with one mind, along the edge of the wood.

April 25.... The cinquefoil well out. I see two or three on the hemlock dry plain, — probably a day or two. I observe a male grackle with a brownish head and the small female on one tree, red-wings [Red-winged Blackbird Agelaius phoeniceus] on another. Return over the top of the hill against the [wind]. The Great Meadows now, at 3.30 P.M., agitated by the strong easterly wind this clear day, when I look against the wind with the sun behind me, look particularly dark blue.

Aspen bark peels; how long?
I landed on Merrick’s pasture near the rock, and when I stepped out of the boat and drew it up, a snipe [Common Snipe Gallinago gallinago] flew up, and lit again seven or eight rods off. After trying in vain for several minutes to see it on the ground there, I advanced a step and, to my surprise, scared up two more, which had squatted on the bare meadow all the while within a rod, while I drew up my boat and made a good deal of noise. In short, I scared up twelve, one or two at a time, within a few rods, which were feeding on the edge of the meadow just laid bare, each rising with a sound like squeak squeak, hoarsely. That part of the meadow seemed all alive with them. It is almost impossible to see one on the meadow, they squat and run so low, and are so completely the color of the ground. They rise from within a rod, fly half a dozen rods, and then drop down on the bare open meadow before your eyes, where there seems not stubble enough to conceal [them], and are at once lost as completely as if they had sunk into the earth. I observed that some, when finally scared from this island, flew off rising quite high, one a few rods behind the other, in their peculiar zigzag manner, rambling about high over the meadow, making it uncertain where they would settle, till at length I lost sight of one and saw the other drop almost perpendicularly into the meadow as it appeared.

April 27.... Apparently a small bullfrog by riverside, though it looks somewhat like a Rana fontinalis; also two or three (apparently) R. palustris in that well of Monroe’s, which have jumped in over the curb, perhaps. I see quite a number of tortoises out sunning, just on the edge of the Hosmer meadow, which is rapidly becoming bare. Their backs shine from afar in the sun. Also one Emys insculpta out higher up. From close by I hear a red-wing’s clear, loud whistle [Red-winged Blackbird Agelaius phoeniceus], — not squeak (which I think may be confined to the grackle). It is like pte!-a pte!-a, or perhaps without the p.

The tapping of a woodpecker is made a more remarkable and emphatic sound by the hollowness of the trunk, the expanses of water which conducts the sound, and the morning hour at which I commonly hear it. I think that the pigeon woodpeckers must be building, they frequent the old aspen now so much....

May 14. Air full of golden robins. Their loud clear note betrays them as soon as they arrive. Yesterday and to-clay I see half a dozen tortoises on a rail, — their first appearance in numbers. Catbird amid shrub oaks. Female red-wing [Red-winged Blackbird Agelaius phoeniceus]. Flood tells me he saw cherry-birds am the 12th of April in Monroe’s garden.
May 19:... Apple in bloom; some, no doubt, earlier. Nighthawk’s squeals. Red-wing’s nest [Red-winged Blackbird](Agelaius phoeniceus) made, and apparently a kingbird’s (?), on black willow four feet above water. [It is a robin’s without mud]...

July 11:... Bathed and lunched under the oak at Tarbell’s first shore. It is about as cool a place as you can find, where you get the southwest breeze from over the broad meadow, for it draws through the valley behind. While sitting there, saw, some twenty-five rods up-stream, amid the pads on the south side, where we had passed, several apparently young ducks, which soon disappeared again in the meadow-grass. Saw them heretofore August 6th last year. They regularly breed hereabouts, and the broad meadow affords lurking-places. The meadow is so broad and level that you see shadows of clouds on it as on the sea. A great snap-turtle floated by us with his head out, in midstream, reconnoitring us. Rambled over the hill at angle. Allium out some time on the shore. I have only seen it here, methinks and on the Assabet shores. 

Hear now the link of bobolinks, and see quite a flock of red-wing blackbirds [Red-winged Blackbird](Agelaius phoeniceus) and young (?). The water milkweed, or [Asclepias pulchra]....

July 13. P. M. — To Corner Spring.

*Orchis lacera,* apparently several days, lower part of spike, willow-row, Hubbard side, opposite Wheildon’s land. See quite a large flock of chattering red-wings [Red-winged Blackbird](Agelaius phoeniceus), the flight of first broods. Thimble-berries are now fairly ripe and abundant along walls, to be strung on herd’s-grass, but not much flavor to them; honest and wholesome. See where the mowers have plucked them. Gather the large black and blackening ones. No drought has shrivelled them this year.

Heard yesterday a sharp and loud *ker-pheet,* I think from a surprised woodchuck, amid bushes, — the *siffleur.* Reminds me somewhat of a peettweet, and also of the squeak of a rabbit, but much louder and sharper. And all is still....

March 28. 8.30 A.M. — Up river to Fair Haven by boat. 

A pleasant morning; the song of the earliest birds, *i.e.* tree sparrows, (now decidedly) and song sparrows and bluebirds, in the air. A red-wing’s purr [Red-winged Blackbird](Agelaius phoeniceus) from a willow....

May 8, Friday: A third fine day.

The sugar maple at Barrett’s is now in full bloom.

I finish the arbor to-night. This has been the third of these remarkably warm and beautiful [days]. I have worked all the while in my shirt-sleeves. Summer has suddenly come upon us, and the birds all together. Some boys have bathed in the river.

Walk to first stone bridge at sunset. *Salix alba,* possibly the 6th. It is a glorious evening. I scent the expanding willow leaves (for there are very few blossoms yet) fifteen rods off. Already hear the cheerful, sprightly note of the yellowbird amid them. It is perfectly warm and still, and the green grass reminds me of June. The air is full
of the fragrance of willow leaves. The high water stretches smooth around. I hear the sound of Barrett’s sawmill with singular distinctness. The ring of toads, the note of the yellowbird, the rich warble of the red-wing, [Red-winged Blackbird Agelaius phoeniceus] the thrasher on the hillside, the robin’s evening song, the woodpecker tapping some dead tree across the water, and I see countless little fuzzy gnats in the air, and dust over the road, between me and the departed sun. Perhaps the evenings of the 6th and 7th were as pleasant. But such an evening makes a crisis in the year. I must make haste home and go out on the water.

I paddle to the Wheeler meadow east of hill after sundown. From amid the alders, etc., I hear the mew of the catbird and the yorrick of Wilson’s thrush. One bullfrog’s faint er-er-roonk from a distance. (Perhaps the Amphibia, better than any creatures, celebrate the changes of temperature.) One dump note. It grows dark around. The full moon rises, and I paddle by its light. It is all evening for the soft-snoring, purring frogs (which I suspect to be Rana palustris). I get within a few feet of them as they sit along the edge of the river and meadow, but cannot see them. Their croak is very fine or rapid, and has a soft, purring sound at a little distance. I see them paddling in the water like toads.

Within a week I have had made a pair of corduroy pants, which cost when done $1.60. They are of that peculiar clay-color, reflecting the light from portions of their surface. They have this advantage, that, beside being very strong, they will look about as well three months hence as now,—or as ill, some would say. Most of my friends are disturbed by my wearing them. I can get four or five pairs for what one ordinary pair would cost in Boston, and each of the former will last two or three times as long under the same circumstances. The tailor said that the stuff was not made in this country; that it was worn by the Irish at home, and now they would not look at it, but others would not wear it, durable and cheap as it is, because it is worn by the Irish. Moreover, I like the color on other accounts. Anything but black clothes. I was pleased the other day to see a son of Concord return after an absence of eight years, not in a shining suit of black, with polished boots and a beaver or silk hat, as if on a furlough from human duties generally,—a mere clothes-horse,—but clad in an honest clay-colored suit and a snug every-day cap. It grew dark around. The birds and beasts are not afraid of me now. A mink came within twenty feet of me the other day as soon as my companion had left me, and if I had had my gray sack on as well as my corduroys, it would perhaps have come quite up to me. Even farmers’ boys, returning to their native town, though not unfamiliar with homely and dirty clothes, make their appearance on this new stage in a go-to-meeting suit.

June 1, 1857: P.M. –To Hill. A red-wing’s [Red-winged Blackbird Agelaius phoeniceus] nest, four eggs, low in a tuft of sedge in an open meadow. What Champollion can translate the hieroglyphics on these eggs? It is always writing of the same character, though much diversified. While the bird picks up the material and lays the egg, who determines the style of the marking? When you approach, away dashes the dark mother, betraying her nest, and then chatters her anxiety from a neighboring bush, where she is soon joined by the red-shouldered male, who comes scolding over your head, chattering and uttering a sharp phe phee-e…. I hear the note of a bobolink concealed in the top of an apple tree behind me. Though this bird’s full strain is ordinarily somewhat trivial, this one appears to be meditating a strain as yet unheard in meadow or orchard. Paulo majora canamus. He is just touching the strings of his theorbo, his glassichord, his water organ, and one or two notes globe themselves and fall in liquid bubbles from his teeming throat. It is as if he touched his harp within a vase of liquid melody, and when he lifted it out, the notes fell like bubbles from the trembling strings. Methinks they are the most liquidly sweet and melodious sounds I ever heard. They are refreshing to my ear as the first distant tinkling and gurgling of a rill to a thirsty man. Oh, never advance farther in your art, never let us hear your full strain, sir. But away he launches, and the meadow is all bespattered with melody. His notes fall with the apple blossoms, in the orchard. The very divinest part of his strain dropping from his overflowing breast singultim, in globes of melody. It is a foretaste of such strains as never fell on mortal ears, to hear which we should rush to our doors and contribute all we possess and are. Or it seemed as if in that vase full of melody some notes sphered themselves, and from time to time bubbled up to the surface and were with difficulty repressed.
March 19. P.M. —To Hill and Grackle Swamp.

Another pleasant and warm day. Painted my boat this afternoon. These spring impressions (as of the apparent waking up of the meadow described day before yesterday) are not repeated the same year, at least not with the same force, for the next day the same phenomenon does not surprise us. Our appetite has lost its edge. The other day the face of the meadow wore a peculiar appearance, as if it were beginning to wake up under the influence of the southwest wind and the warm sun, but it cannot again this year present precisely that appearance to me. I have taken a step forward to a new position and must see something else. You perceive, and are affected by, changes too subtle to be described.

I see little swarms of those fine fuzzy gnats in the air. I am behind the Hemlocks. It is their wings which are most conspicuous, when they are in the sun. Their bodies are comparatively small and black, and they have two mourning plumes in their fronts. Are not these the winter gnat? They keep up a circulation in the air like water-bugs on the water. They people a portion of the otherwise vacant air, being apparently fond of the sunshine, in which they are most conspicuous. Sometimes a globular swarm two feet or more in diameter, suggesting how genial and habitable the air is become.

I hear turkeys gobble. This too, I suppose, is a spring sound. I hear a steady sigh of the wind, rising and swelling into a roar, in the pines, which seems to tell of a long, warm rain to come.

I see a white pine which has borne fruit in its ninth year. The cones, four in number, which are seven eighths of an inch long, have stems about two and a half inches long! — not yet curving down; so the stem probably does not grow any more.

Met Channing and walked on with him to what we will call Grackle Swamp, admiring the mosses; those bright-yellow hypnums (?), like sunlight on decaying logs, and jungermannia, like sea-mosses ready spread. Hear the phebe note of a chickadee. In the swamp, see grackles, four or five, with the light ring about eye, —their bead eyes. They utter only those ineffectual split notes, no conqueree.

Might I not call that Hemlock Brook? and the source of it Horse-Skull meadow?

Hear the pleasant chill-lill of the F. hyemalis, the first time I have heard this note. This, too, suggests pleasant associations.

By the river, see distinctly red-wings [Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*] and hear their conqueree. They are not associated with grackles. They are an age before their cousins, have attained to clearness and liquidity. They are officers, epauletted; the others are rank and file. I distinguish one even by its flight, hovering slowly from tree-top to tree-top, as if ready to utter its liquid notes. Their whistle is very clear and sharp, while the grackle’s is ragged and split.

It is a fine evening, as I stand on the bridge. The waters are quite smooth; very little ice to be seen. The red-wing and song sparrow are singing, and a flock of tree sparrows is pleasantly warbling. A new era has come. The red-wing’s gurgle-ee is heard when smooth waters begin; they come together. One or two boys are out trying their skiffs, even like the fuzzy gnats in the sun, and as often as one turns his boat round on the smooth surface, the setting sun is reflected from its side.

I feel reproach when I have spoken with levity, when I have made a jest, of my own existence. The makers have thus secured seriousness and respect for their work in our very organization. The most serious events have their ludicrous aspect, such as death; but we cannot excuse ourselves when we have taken this view of them only. It is pardonable when we spurn the proprieties, even the sanctities, making them stepping-stones to something higher.

June 8: P.M. To marsh hawk’s nest near Hubbard’s Bath.

I see many breams’ nests made, and in one or two in which I look, I find, on taking out the stones and the gravel, the small yellowish ova about one twentieth of an inch in diameter. This is not, at least ordinarily, visible now as you look down on the nest, but, on taking up portions of the bottom of the concave nest, you find it scattered (not crowded) over the sand, stones, clam shells, weeds, etc., which form the bottom of the nest.

It studs the little gray and brown stones, rather scatteredly, like some kind of gem adhering pretty firmly, and
the bream is steadily poised over her treasures. You see the bream poised over her large concave nest in the sand, and, taking up a part of the bottom, as some brown stone, you find it studded with the small gem-like ova, loosely dispersed. Apparently it has not been laid long. The Salix nigra is still in bloom. I see red-wing blackbirds [Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*] hatched. In several places I see where dead suckers have been at last partly devoured by some animal, and their great bladders are seen floating off.

Thomas Bell, in his “British Reptiles,” says of “the Terrapene Europæa, the common lacustrine tortoise of the Continent,” “As they live principally upon small fish, the air-bags of which they reject, it is said that the people are wont to judge of the quantity of tortoises to be found in a lake or pond, by the number of air-bags which are seen swimming on the surface of the water.”

The marsh hawk’s eggs are not yet hatched. She rises when I get within a rod and utters that peculiar cackling or scolding note, much like, but distinct from, that of the pigeon woodpecker. She keeps circling over the nest and repeatedly stoops within a rod of my head in an angry manner. She is not so large as a hen-hawk, and is much more slender. She will come sailing swiftly and low over the tops of the trees and bushes, etc., and then stoop as near to my head as she dares, in order to scare me away.

The primaries, of which I count but five, are very long and loose, or distant, like fingers with which she takes hold of the air, and form a very distinct part of the wing, making an angle with the rest. Yet they are not broad and give to the wing a long and slender appearance. The legs are stretched straight back under the tail. I see nothing of the male, nor did I before. A red-wing and a kingbird are soon in pursuit of the hawk, which proves, I think, that she meddles with their nests or themselves.

She circles over me, scolding, as far as the edge of the wood, or fifteen rods.

The early potentilla is now in some places erect. The sidesaddle-flower is out, how long? and the sweet flag, how long?

I see quite common, on the surface in deep water wherever there are weeds, misty white strings of spawn, reminding one of toad-spawn without the ova, only whiter, or more opaque. But these strings turn on themselves, forming small masses four to eight inches long, attached to the weeds, Ranunculus Purshii, potamogeton, etc., etc. These strings are full of minute ova, like seeds, pale-brown, oval or elliptical, about one fiftieth of an inch long.

I perceive distinctly to-day that there is no articular line along the sides of the back of the bullfrog, but that there is one along the back of that bullfrog-like, smaller, widely dispersed and early frog so common about fountains, brooks, ditches, and the river, of which I probably have one small one bottled and have heard the croak (vide April 5th, 1858). That pale-brown or oat spawn must belong, then, I think, to the Ranafontinalis.

A kingbird’s nest with three eggs, lined with some hair, in a fork or against upright part of a willow, just above near stone bridge. Is that small spiked rush from a few inches to a foot or more in height Eleocharis palustris? or tennis? In early aster meadow and else where common, along meadow-paths. Whiteweed is getting to be common.

March 11. 6 A.M. — By riverside I hear the song of many song sparrows, the most of a song of any yet. And on the swamp white oak top by the stone bridge, I see and hear a red-wing [Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*]. It sings almost steadily on its perch there, sitting all alone, as if to attract companions (and I see two more, also solitary, on different tree-tops within a quarter of a mile), calling the river to life and tempting ice to melt and trickle like its own sprayey notes. Another flies over on high, with a *tchuck* and at length a clear whistle. The birds anticipate the spring; they come to melt the ice with their songs.

But methinks the sound of the woodpecker tapping is as much a spring note as any these mornings; it echoes peculiarly in the air of a spring morning.

P. M.—To Hunt house.

I go to get one more sight of the old house which Hosmer is pulling down, but I am too late to see much of it. The chimney is gone and little more than the oblong square frame stands. E. Hosmer and Nathan Hosmer are employed taking it down. The latter draws all the nails, however crooked, and puts them in his pockets, for,
Thoreau's Red-Wing

being wrought ones, he says it is worth the while.
It appears plainly, now that the frame is laid bare,

\[ \text{Diagram of house frame} \]

that the eastern two-thirds of the main house is older than the western third, for you can see where the west part has been added on, at the line AB. All the joists in the old part are hewn; in the newer, sawn. But very extensive repairs had been made in the old part, probably at the same time with the addition. Also the back part had been added on to the new part, merely butted on at one side without tenant or mortise. The peculiar cedar laths were confined to the old part. The whole has oak sills and pine timbers. The two Hosmers were confident that the chimney was built at the same time with the new part, because, though there were flues in it from the new part, there was no break in the courses of brick about them. On the chimney was the date 1703 (?),–I think that was it,– and if this was the date of the chimney, it would appear that the old part belonged to the Winthrops, and it may go back to near the settlement of the town. The laths long and slender of white cedar split. In the old part the ends of the timbers were not merely mortised into the posts, but rested on a shoulder thus:

\[ \text{Diagram of chimney} \]

The fireplace measures twelve feet wide by three deep by four and a half high. The mantel-tree is log, fourteen feet long and some fifteen to sixteen inches square at the ends, but one half cut away diagonally between the ends, and now charred.

\[ \text{Diagram of fireplace} \]

It would take three men to handle it easily. The timbers of the old part had been cased and the joists plastered over at some time, and, now that they were uncovered, you saw many old memorandums and scores in chalk on them, as “May ye 4th,” “Ephraim Brown,” “0–3e–4d,” “oxen,”

\[ \text{Diagram of chalk marks} \]

– so they kept their score or tally, – such as the butcher and baker sometimes make. Perhaps the occupant had let his neighbor have the use of his oxen so many days. I asked if they had found any old coins. N. Hosmer answered, Yes, he had, and showed it me, – took it out of his pocket. It was about as big as a quarter of a dollar, with “Britain,” etc., legible, “Geo II,” and date “1742,” but it was of lead. But there was no manuscript, – not a
copy of verses, only these chalk records of butter and cheese, oxen and bacon, and a counterfeit coin, out of the smoky recesses. Very much such relics as you find in the old rats’ nests in which these houses abound. [Vide (PAGES 46-48).]

My mother says that she has been to the charitable society there. One old jester of the town used to call it “the chattable society.”

Mrs. A. takes on dolefully on account of the solitude in which she lives, but she gets little consolation. Mrs. B. says she envies her that retirement. Mrs. A. is aware that she does, and says it is as if a thirsty man should envy another the river in which he is drowning. So goes the world. It is either this extreme or that. Of solitude one gets too much and another not enough.

E. Hosmer says that a man told him that he had seen my uncle Charles take a twelve-foot ladder, set it up straight, and then run up and down the other side, kicking it from behind him as he went down. E. H. told of seeing him often at the tavern toss his hat to the ceiling, twirling it over, and catch it on his head every time.

Large flocks of blackbirds to-day in the elm-tops and other trees. These are the first conspicuous large flocks of birds. J. Farmer says he saw ducks this morning and has seen larks some days. Channing saw geese to-day.

Find out as soon as possible what are the best things in your composition, and then shape the rest to fit them. The former will be the midrib and veins of the leaf.

There is always some accident in the best things, whether thoughts or expressions or deeds. The memorable thought, the happy expression, the admirable deed are only partly ours. The thought came to us because we were in a fit mood; also we were unconscious and did not know that we had said or done a good thing. We must walk consciously only part way toward our goal, and then leap in the dark to our success. What we do best or most perfectly is what we have most thoroughly learned by the longest practice, and at length it falls from us without our notice, as a leaf from a tree. It is the last time we shall do it, – our unconscious leavings.


Going down railroad, listening intentionally, I hear, far through the notes of song sparrows (which are very numerous), the song of one or two larks. Also hearing a coarse chuck, I look up and see four blackbirds, whose size and long tails betray them crow blackbirds. [TWO QUESTIONMARKS IN PENCIL HERE.] Also I hear, I am pretty sure, the cackle of a pigeon woodpecker.

The bright catkins of the willow are the springing most generally observed.

P. M.–To Great Fields.

Water rising still. Winter-freshet ice on meadows still more lifted up and partly broken in some places. The broad light artery of the river (and some meadows, too) very fair in the distance from Peter’s.

Talking with Garfield to-day about his trapping, he said that mink brought three dollars and a quarter, a remarkably high price, and asked if I had seen any. I said that I commonly saw two or three in a year. He said that he had not seen one alive for eight or ten years. “But you trap them?” “O yes,” he said. “I catch thirty or forty dollars’ worth every winter.” This suggests how little a trapper may see of his game. Garfield caught a skunk lately.

In some meadows I see a great many dead spiders on the ice, where apparently it has been overflowed—or rather it was the heavy rain, methinks—when they had no retreat.

Hear a ground squirrel’s sharp chirrup, which makes you start, it is so sudden; but he is probably earthed again, for I do not see him.

On the northeast part of the Great Fields, I find the broken shell of a Cistudo Blandingii, on very dry soil. This is the fifth, then, I have seen in the town. All the rest were in the Great Meadows (one of them in a ditch) and one within a rod or two of Beck Stow’s Swamp.

It is remarkable that the spots where I find most arrowheads, etc., being light, dry soil,—as the Great Fields, Clamshell Hill, etc.,—are among the first to be bare of snow, and the frost gets out there first. It is very curiously and particularly true, for the only parts of the northeast section of the Great Fields which are so dry that I do not slump there are those small in area, where perfectly bare patches of sand occur, and there, singularly enough, the arrowheads are particularly common. Indeed, in some cases I find them only on such bare spots a rod or two in extent where a single wigwam might have stood, and not half a dozen rods off in any direction. Yet the difference of level may not be more than a foot,—if there is any. It is as if the Indians had selected precisely the driest spots on the whole plain, with a view to their advantage at this season. If you were going to pitch a tent to-night on the Great Fields, you would inevitably pitch on one of these spots, or else lie down in water or mud or on ice. It is as if they had chosen the site of their wigwams at this very season of the year.
I see a small flock of blackbirds [Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*] flying over, some rising, others falling, yet all advancing together, one flock but many birds, some silent, others chucking, --incessant alternation. This harmonious movement as in a dance, this agreeing to differ, makes the charm of the spectacle to me. One bird looks fractional, naked, like a single thread or raveling from the web to which it belongs. Alternation! Alternation! Heaven and hell! Here again in the flight of a bird, its ricochet motion, is that undulation observed in so many materials, as in the mackerel sky.

If men were to be destroyed and the books they have written [WERE TO] be transmitted to a new race of creatures, in a new world, what kind of record would be found in them of so remarkable a phenomenon as the rainbow?

I cannot easily forget the beauty of those terrestrial browns in the rain yesterday. The withered grass was not of that very pale hoary brown that it is to-day, now that it is dry and lifeless, but, being perfectly saturated and dripping with the rain, the whole hillside seemed to reflect a certain yellowish light, so that you looked around for the sun in the midst of the storm. All the yellow and red and leather-color in the fawn-colored weeds was more intense than at any other season. The withered ferns which fell last fall--pinweeds, sarothra, etc.--were actually a glowing brown for the same reason, being all dripping wet. The cladonias crowning the knolls had visibly expanded and erected themselves, though seen twenty rods off, and the knolls appeared swelling and bursting as with yeast. All these hues of brown were most beautifully blended, so that the earth appeared covered with the softest and most harmoniously spotted and tinted tawny fur coat of any animal. The very bare sand slopes, with only here and there a thin crusting of mosses, was [SIC] a richer color than ever it is.

In short, in these early spring rains, the withered herbage, thus saturated, and reflecting its brightest withered tint, seems in a certain degree to have revived, and sympathizes with the fresh greenish or yellowish or brownish lichens in its midst, which also seem to have withered. It seemed to me--and I think it may be the truth--that the abundant moisture, bringing out the highest color in the brown surface of the earth, generated a certain degree of light, which, when the rain held up a little, reminded you of the sun shining through a thick mist.

Oak leaves which have sunk deep into the ice now are seen to be handsomely spotted with black (of fungi or lichens?), which spots are rarely perceived in dry weather.

All that vegetable life which loves a superfluity of moisture is now rampant, cold though it is, compared with summer. Radical leaves are as bright as ever they are.

The barrenest surfaces, perhaps, are the most interesting in such weather as yesterday, when the most terrene colors are seen. The wet earth and sand, and especially subsoil, are very invigorating sights.

The Hunt house, to draw from memory,--though I have given its measures within two years in my Journal,--looked like this:

![House Diagram](image)

This is only generally correct, without a scale.

Probably grackles have been seen some days. I think I saw them on the 11th? Garfield says he saw black ducks yesterday.

March 28. P. M.--Paddle to the Bedford line.

It is now high time to look for arrowheads, etc. I spend many hours every spring gathering the crop which the melting snow and rain have washed bare. When, at length, some island in the meadow or some sandy field elsewhere has been plowed, perhaps for rye, in the fall, I take note of it, and do not fail to repair thither as soon as the earth begins to be dry in the spring. If the spot chances never to have been cultivated before, I am the first to gather a crop from it. The farmer little thinks that another reaps a harvest which is the fruit of his toil. As much ground is turned up in a day by the plow as Indian implements could not have turned over in a month,
and my eyes rest on the evidences of an aboriginal life which passed here a thousand years ago perchance. Especially if the knolls in the meadows are washed by a freshet where they have been plowed the previous fall, the soil will be taken away lower down and the stones left, — the arrowheads, etc., and soapstone pottery amid them, — somewhat as gold is washed in a dish or tom. I landed on two spots this afternoon and picked up a dozen arrowheads. It is one of the regular pursuits of the spring. As much as sportsmen go in pursuit of ducks, and gunners of musquash, and scholars of rare books, and travellers of adventures, and poets of ideas, and all men of money, I go in search of arrowheads when the proper season comes round again. So I help myself to live worthily, and loving my life as I should. It is a good collyrium to look on the bare earth, — to pore over it so much, getting strength to all your senses, like Antaeus. If I did not find arrowheads, I might, perchance, begin to pick up crockery and fragments of pipes, — the relics of a more recent man. Indeed, you can hardly name a more innocent or wholesome entertainment. As I am thus engaged, I hear the rumble of the bowling-alley’s thunder, which has begun again in the village. It comes before the earliest natural thunder. But what its lightning is, and what atmospheres it purifies, I do not know. Or I might collect the various bones which I come across. They would make a museum that would delight some Owen at last, and what a text they might furnish me for a course of lectures on human life or the like! I might spend my days collecting the fragments of pipes until I found enough, after all my search, to compose one perfect pipe when laid together.

I have not decided whether I had better publish my experience in searching for arrowheads in three volumes, with plates and an index, or try to compress it into one. These durable implements seem to have been suggested to the Indian mechanic with a view to my entertainment in a succeeding period. After all the labor expended on it, the bolt may have been shot but once perchance, and the shaft which was devoted to it decayed, and there lay the arrowhead, sinking into the ground, awaiting me. They lie all over the hills with like expectation, and in due time the husbandman is sent, and, tempted by the promise of corn or rye, he plows the land and turns them up to my view. Many as I have found, methinks the last one gives me about the same delight that the first did. Some time or other, you would say, it had rained arrowheads, for they lie all over the surface of America. You may have your peculiar tastes. Certain localities in your town may seem from association unattractive and uninhabitable to you. You may wonder that the land bears any money value there, and pity some poor fellow who is said to survive in that neighborhood. But plow up a new field there, and you will find the omnipresent arrow-points strewn over it, and it will appear that the red man, with other tastes and associations, lived there too. No matter how far from the modern road or meeting-house, no matter how near. They lie in the meeting-house cellar, and they lie in the distant cow-pasture. And some collections which were made a century ago by the curious like myself have been dispersed again, and they are still as good as new. You cannot tell the third-hand ones (for they are all second-hand) from the others, such is their persistent out-of-door durability; for they were chiefly made to be lost. They are sown, like a grain that is slow to germinate, broadcast over the earth. Like the dragon’s teeth which bore a crop of soldiers, these bear crops of philosophers and poets, and the same seed is just as good to plant again. It is a stone fruit. Each one yields me a thought. I come nearer to the maker of it than if I found his bones. His bones would not prove any wit that wielded them, such as this work of his bones does. It is humanity inscribed on the face of the earth, patent to my eyes as soon as the snow goes off, not hidden away in some crypt or grave or under a pyramid. No disgusting mummy, but a clean stone, the best symbol or letter that could have been transmitted to me.

The Red Man, his mark

At every step I see it, and I can easily supply the “Tahatawan” or “Mantatuket” that might have been written if he had had a clerk. It is no single inscription on a particular rock, but a footprint — rather a mind-print — left everywhere, and altogether illegible. No vandals, however vandalic in their disposition, can be so industrious as to destroy them.

Time will soon destroy the works of famous painters and sculptors, but the Indian arrowhead will balk his efforts and Eternity will have to come to his aid. They are not fossil bones, but, as it were, fossil thoughts, forever reminding me of the mind that shaped them. I would fain know that I am treading in the tracks of human game, — that I am on the trail of mind, — and these little reminders never fail to set me right. When I see these signs I know that the subtle spirits that made them are not far off, into whatever form transmuted. What if you do plow and hoe amid them, and swear that not one stone shall be left upon another? They are only the less like signs I know that the subtle spirits that made them are not far off, into whatever form transmuted. What if you game, — that I am on the trail of mind, — and these little reminders never fail to set me right. When I see these
some Vandal chieftain has razed to the earth the British Museum, and, perchance, the winged bulls from Nineveh shall have lost most if not all of their features, the arrowheads which the museum contains will, perhaps, find themselves at home again in familiar dust, and resume their shining in new springs upon the bared surface of the earth then, to be picked up for the thousandth time by the shepherd or savage that may be wandering there, and once more suggest their story to him. Indifferent they to British Museums, and, no doubt, Nineveh bulls are old acquaintances of theirs, for they have camped on the plains of Mesopotamia, too, and were buried with the winged bulls. They cannot be said to be lost nor found. Surely their use was not so much to bear its fate to some bird or quadruped, or man, as it was to lie here near the surface of the earth for a perpetual reminder to the generations that come after. As for museums, I think it is better to let Nature take care of our antiquities. These are our antiquities, and they are cleaner to think of than the rubbish of the Tower of London, and – they are a more ancient armor than is there. It is a recommendation that they are so inobvious, – that they occur only to the eye and thought that chances to be directed toward them. When you pick up an arrowhead and put it in your pocket, it may say: “Eh, you think you have got me, do you? But I shall wear a hole in your pocket at last, or if you put me in your cabinet, your heir or great-grandson will forget me or throw me out the window directly, or when the house falls I shall drop into the cellar, and there I shall lie quite at home again. Ready to be found again, eh? Perhaps some new red man that is to come will fit me to a shaft and make me do his bidding for a bow-shot. What reck I?”

As we were paddling over the Great Meadows, I saw at a distance, high in the air above the middle of the meadow, a very compact flock of blackbirds [Red-winged Blackbird Agelaius phoeniceus] advancing against the sun. Though there were more than a hundred, they did not appear to occupy more than six feet in breadth, but the whole flock was dashing first to the right and then to the left. When advancing straight toward me and the sun, they made but little impression on the eye, – so many fine dark points merely, seen against the sky, – but as often as they wheeled to the right or left, displaying their wings flat-wise and the whole length of their bodies, they were a very conspicuous black mass. This fluctuation in the amount of dark surface was a very pleasing phenomenon. It reminded me [OF] those blinds whose sashes [sic] are made to move all together by a stick, now admitting nearly all the light and now entirely excluding it; so the flock of blackbirds opened and shut. But at length they suddenly spread out and dispersed, some flying off this way, and others that, as, when a wave strikes against a cliff, it is dashed upward and lost in fine spray. So they lost their compactness and impetus and broke up suddenly in mid-air.

We see eight geese floating afar in the middle of the meadow, at least half a mile off, plainly (with glass) much larger than the ducks in their neighborhood and the white on their heads very distinct. When at length they arise and fly off northward, their peculiar heavy undulating wings, blue-heron-like and unlike any duck, are very noticeable.

The black, sheldrake, etc., move their wings rapidly, and remind you of paddle-wheel steamers. Methinks the wings of the black duck appear to be set very far back when it is flying. The meadows, which are still covered far and wide, are quite alive with black ducks.

When walking about on the low east shore at the Bedford bound, I heard a faint honk, and looked around over the water with my glass, thinking it came from that side or perhaps from a farmyard in that direction. I soon heard it again, and at last we detected a great flock passing over, quite on the other side of us and pretty high up. From time to time one of the company [Canada Goose Branta canadensis] uttered a short note, that peculiarly metallic, clangorous sound. These were in a single undulating line, and, as usual, one or two were from time to time crowded out of the line, apparently by the crowding of those in the rear, and were flying on one side and trying to recover their places, but at last a second short line was formed, meeting the long one at the usual angle and making a figure somewhat like a hay-hook. I suspect it will be found that there is really some advantage in large birds of passage flying in the wedge form and cleaving their way through the air, – that they really do overcome its resistance best in this way, – and perchance the direction and strength of the wind determine the comparative length of the two sides.

The great gulls fly generally up or down the river valley, cutting off the bends of the river, and so do these geese.
These fly sympathizing with the river, – a stream in the air, soon lost in the distant sky. We see these geese swimming and flying at midday and when it is perfectly fair. If you scan the horizon at this season of the year you are very likely to detect a small flock of dark ducks moving with rapid wing athwart the sky, or see the undulating line of migrating geese against the sky. Perhaps it is this easterly wind which brings geese, as it did on the 24th.

Ball's Hill, with its withered oak leaves and its pines, looks very fair to-day, a mile and a half off across the water, through a very thin varnish or haze. It reminds me of the isle which was called up from the bottom of the sea, which was given to Apollo.

How charming the contrast of land and water, especially a temporary island in the flood, with its new and tender shores of waving outline, so withdrawn yet habitable, above all if it rises into a hill high above the water and contrasting with it the more, and if that hill is wooded, suggesting wildness! Our vernal lakes have a beauty to my mind which they would not possess if they were more permanent. Everything is in rapid flux here, suggesting that Nature is alive to her extremities and superficies. To-day we sail swiftly on dark rolling waves or paddle over a sea as smooth as a mirror, unable to touch the bottom, where mowers work and hide their jugs in August; coasting the edge of maple swamps, where alder tassels and white maple flowers are kissing the tide that has risen to meet them. But this particular phase of beauty is fleeting. Nature has so many shows for us she cannot afford to give much time to this. In a few days, perchance, these lakes will have all run away to the sea.

Such are the pictures which she paints. When we look at our masterpieces we see only dead paint and its vehicle, which suggests no liquid life rapidly flowing off from beneath. In the former case—Nature it is constant surprise and novelty. In many arrangements there is a wearisome monotony. We know too well what [WE] shall have for our Saturday's dinner, but each day's feast in Nature's year is a surprise to us and adapted to our appetite and spirits. She has arranged such an order of feasts as never tires. Her motive is not economy but satisfaction.

As we sweep past the north end of Poplar Hill, with a sand-hole in it, its now dryish, pale-brown mottled sward clothing its rounded slope, which was lately saturated with moisture, presents very agreeable hues. In this light, in fair weather, the patches of now dull-greenish mosses contrast just regularly enough with the pale-brown grass. It is like some rich but modest-colored Kidderminster carpet, or rather the skin of a monster python tacked green mosses and lichens contrast with the brown grass, but ere long the surface will be uniformly green. I feel as if I could land to stroke and kiss the very sward, it is so fair. It is homely and domestic to my eyes like skin of a pard, the great leopard mother that Nature is, where she lies at length, exposing her flanks to the sun.

Deep lie the seeds of the rhexia now, absorbing wet from the flood, but in a few months this mile-wide lake will have gone to the other side of the globe; and the tender rhexia will lift its head on the drifted hummocks in dense patches, bright and scarlet as a flame,—such succession have we here,—where the wild goose and countless wild ducks have floated and dived above them. So Nature condenses her matter. She is a thousand thick.

One side of each wave and ripple is dark and the other light blue, reflecting the sky,—as I look down on them from my boat,—and these colors (?) combined produce a dark blue at a distance. These blue spaces ever remind me of the blue in the iridescence produced by oily matter on the surface, for you are slow to regard it as a reflection of the sky. The rippling undulating surface over which you glide is like a changeable blue silk garment.

Here, where in August the bittern booms in the grass, and mowers march en échelon and whet their scythes and crunch the ripe wool-grass, raised now a few feet, you scud before the wind in your tight bark and listen to the surge (or sough?) of the great waves sporting around you, while you hold the steering-oar and your mast bends to the gale and you stow all your ballast to windward.

The crisped sound of surging waves that rock you, that ceaseless roll and gambol, and ever and anon break into your boat.

Deep lie the seeds of the rhexia now, absorbing wet from the flood, but in a few months this mile-wide lake will have gone to the other side of the globe; and the tender rhexia will lift its head on the drifted hummocks in dense patches, bright and scarlet as a flame,—such succession have we here,—where the wild goose and countless wild ducks have floated and dived above them. So Nature condenses her matter. She is a thousand thick. So many crops the same surface bears.
Undoubtedly the geese fly more numerously over rivers which, like ours, flow northeasterly, – are more at home with the water under them. Each flock runs the gauntlet of a thousand gunners, and when you see them steer off from you and your boat you may remember how great their experience in such matters may be, how many such boats and gunnels they have seen and avoided between here and Mexico, and even now, perchance (though you, low plodding, little dream it), they see one or two more lying in wait ahead. They have an experienced ranger of the air for their guide. The echo of one gun hardly dies away before they see another pointed at them. How many bullets or smaller shot have sped in vain toward their ranks! Ducks fly more irregularly and shorter distances at a time. The geese rest in fair weather by day only in the midst of our broadest meadow or pond. So they go, anxious and earnest to hide their nests under the pole. The gulls seem used to boats and sails and will often fly quite near without manifesting alarm.

April 25, 1860: A cold day, so that the people you meet remark upon it, yet the thermometer is 47 at 2 P.M. We should not have remarked upon it in March. It is cold for April, being windy withal.

I fix a stake on the west side the willows at my boat’s place, the top of which is at summer level and is about ten and a half inches below the stone wharf there. The river is one and one fourth inches above summer level to-day. That rock northwest of the boat’s place is about fifteen inches (the top of it) below summer level. Heron Rock top (just above the junction of the rivers) is thirteen inches above summer level. I judge by my eye that the rock on the north side, where the first bridge crossed the river, is about four inches lower than the last.

Mr. Stewart tells me that he has found a gray squirrel’s nest up the Assabet, in a maple tree. I resolve that I too will find it. I do not know within less than a quarter of a mile where to look, nor whether it is in a hollow tree, or in a nest of leaves. I examine the shore first and find where he landed. I then examine the maples in that neighborhood to see what one has been climbed. I soon find one the bark of which has been lately rubbed by the boots of a climber, and, looking up, see a nest. It was a large nest made of maple twigs, with a centre of leaves, lined with finer, about twenty feet from the ground, against the leading stem of a large red maple. I noticed no particular entrance. When I put in my hand from above and felt the young, they uttered a dull croak-like squeak, and one clung fast to my hand when I took it out through the leaves and twigs with which it was covered. It was yet blind, and could not have been many days old, yet it instinctively clung to my hand with its little claws, as if it knew that there was danger of its falling from a height to the ground which it never saw. The idea of clinging was strongly planted in it. There was quite a depth of loose sticks, maple twigs, piled on the top of the nest. No wonder that they become skillful climbers who are born high above the ground and begin their lives in a tree, having first of all to descend to reach the earth. They are cradled in a tree-top, in but a loose basket, in helpless infancy, and there slumber when their mother is away. No wonder that they are never made dizzy by high climbing, that were born in the top of a tree, and learn to cling fast to the tree before their eyes are open.

On my way to the Great Meadows I see boys a-fishing, with perch and bream on their string, apparently having good luck, the river is so low.

The river appears the lower, because now, before the weeds and grass have grown, we can see by the bare shore of mud or sand and the rocks how low it is. At midsommer we might imagine water at the base of the grass where there was none.

I hear the greatest concert of blackbirds, –red-wings [Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*] and crow blackbirds nowadays, especially of the former. … The maples and willows along the river, and the button-bushes, are all alive with them. They look like black fruit on the trees, distributed over the top at pretty equal distances. It is worth while to see how slyly they hide at the base of the thick and shaggy button-bushes at this stage of the water. They will suddenly cease their strains and flit away and secrete themselves low amid these bushes till you are past; or you scare up an unexpectedly large flock from such a place, where you had seen none.

I pass a large quire in full blast on the oaks, etc., on the island in the meadow northeast of Peter’s. Suddenly they are hushed, and I hear the loud rippling rush made by their wings as they dash away, and, looking up, I see what I take to be a sharp-shinned hawk just alighting on the trees where they were, having failed to catch one. They retreat some forty rods off, to another tree, and renew their concert there. The hawk plumes himself, and then flies off, rising gradually and beginning to circle, and soon it joins its mate, and soars with it high in the
sky and out of sight, as if the thought of so terrestrial a thing as a blackbird had never entered its head. It appeared to have a plain reddish-fawn breast. The size more than anything made me think it a sharp-shin. When looking into holes in trees to find the squirrel’s nest, I found a pout partly dried, with its tail gone, in one maple, about a foot above the ground. This was probably left there by a mink. Minott says that, being at work in his garden once, he saw a mink coming up from the brook with a pout in her mouth, half-way across his land. The mink, observing him, dropped her pout and stretched up her head, looking warily around, then, taking up the pout again, went onward and went under a rock in the wall by the roadside. He looked there and found the young in their nest, — so young that they were all “red” yet.

April 29:... P.M. — Up Assabet.
The earliest aspen is just bursting into bloom, but none is quite flattened out.
I listen to a concert of red-wings, [Red-winged Blackbird \textit{Agelaius phoeniceus}] –their rich sprayey notes, amid which a few more liquid and deep in a lower tone or undertone, as if it bubbled up from the very water beneath the button-bushes; as if those singers sat lower. Some old and skillful performer touches these deep and liquid notes, and the rest seem to get up a concert just to encourage him. Yet it is ever a prelude or essay with him, as are all good things, and the melody he is capable of and which he did not hear this time is what we remember. The future will draw him out. The different individuals sit singing and pluming themselves and not appearing to have any conversation with one another. They are only tuning all at once; they never seriously perform; the hour has not arrived. Then all go off with a hurried and perhaps alarmed \textit{tchuck tchuck}....

July 27, Friday: A.M. – Pretty heavy rain last night.
The day after a heavy rain, I can detect all the poor or sappy shingles on my neighbor’s low roof which I overlook, for they, absorbing much water and not drying for a long time, are so many black squares spotting the gray roof.

2 P.M. – Sail and paddle down river.
The water has begun to be clear and sunny, revealing the fishes and countless minnows of all sizes and colors, this year’s brood.
I see healthy blossoms of the front-rank polygonum just fairly begun.
I see running on the muddy shore under the pontederia a large flat and thin-edged brown bug (with six legs), some seven eighths of an inch long, pointed behind; with apparently its eggs, fifty or sixty in number, large and dark-colored, standing side by side on their ends and forming a very conspicuous patch which covers about a third of its flat upper surface.

I remove one with my knife, and it appears to stand in a thick glutinous matter. It runs through the water and mud, and falls upon its back a foot or more from my hand without dislodging them.
See, twenty rods or more down-stream, four or five young ducks, which appear already to be disturbed by my boat. So, leaving that to attract their attention, I make my way alongshore in the high grass and behind the trees till I am opposite to them. At a distance they appear simply black and white, as they swim deep, – black backs and white throats. Now I find that they have retreated a little into the pontederia, and are very busily diving, or dipping, not immersing their whole bodies, but their heads and shoulders while their bodies are perfectly perpendicular, just like tame ducks. All of them close together will be in this attitude at the same moment. I now
see that the throat, and probably upper part, at least, of breast, is clear-white, and there is a clear line of white above eye and on neck within a line of black; and as they stand on their heads, the tips apparently of their tails (possibly wings??) are conspicuously white or whitish; the upper part, also, is seen to be brownish rather than black. I presume these to be young summer ducks, though so dark; say two thirds grown.

How easy for the young ducks to hide amid the pickerel-weed along our river, while a boat goes by! and this plant attains its height when these water-fowl are of a size to need its shelter. Thousands of them might be concealed by it along our river, not to speak of the luxuriant sedge and grass of the meadows, much of it so wet as to be inaccessible. These ducks are diving scarcely two feet within the edge of the pickerel-weed yet one who had not first seen them exposed from a distance would never suspect their neighborhood.

See very great flocks of young red-wing blackbirds [Red-winged Blackbird \( \text{Agelaius phoeniceus} \)].


It was during the year 1857, while revelling in our school-life at Concord, that we first became attracted by a singular person [Henry Thoreau] who might be seen each day pacing through the long village street, with sturdy step and honest mien, now pausing to listen to some rich warble from the elms high overhead, or stooping to examine some creeping thing, of interest only to him who knew its ways. A casual observer might have passed him in the street without noticing in him anything peculiar or interesting, for his dress was plain, befitting the man, and consistent with his stoical principles respecting matters of this description; yet whoever penetrated deeper, could not fail to mark in him the “honest man,” nor in his countenance, half hidden by a generous beard, his nut-brown
complexion and soft blue eye, help discerning beneath them only a warm heart, and a nature keenly alive to what was most impressive in the world around him. Spite of the faded corduroy, this salient trait in his character shone forth with unmistakable sincerity. He seemed like some sturdy mountaineer or hardy lumberman, in whom a rugged life has left only yet sturdier strength, with finer traits awakened by a daily contemplation of stupendous mountains or primeval forests. This love for man formed his passport to the favor of all whom he chanced to meet. It procured for him respect among his townsfolk, and a welcome greeting from every schoolboy, for he "carried his heart in his hand," as it were, always willing to offer it to him who might justly claim a share of it.

Our curiosity, once excited, increased daily. In the ramble after school, we often met him, sometimes far from the town, deep in the thickest of the wood, searching untiringly among the brambles or underbrush, as though he had yet something to find, for which his search had hitherto been vain; or oftener we passed him on the river, paddling in his strange craft, built long ago for visiting the Merrimack, gliding silently along so as hardly to ruffle the surface of the water, the prow, sturdy forerunner of himself, parting the lilypads with gentle touch, quietly cleaving a way among them, or thrusting than impatiently beneath. As he glided on, the ripple at the bow appeared to herald unto each denizen of the stream the coming of a friend. All seemed to know him, and hail his approach with increased song. The "red-wing" kept his perch beside his mate, the little "yellow-throat" moved listlessly about, chasing his reflection in the water or sang his kind welcome, "Don’t you wish it? don’t you wish it? don’t you wish it?" Even the staid turtle thought twice before dropping from his seat, finally deciding with wonted judgment, after the boat had passed. Every living thing, every leaf and flower, were known to him, nor did the smallest objects of interest escape the glance of his observing eye. There was no corner of the way but it contained something for him, though others might look in vain to find it. No barren twig but it held in its grasp some new chrysalis, or the ova of some strange insect. Thus did Nature reveal to him the richest treasures of her store, as if sure of finding in this disciple a worthy advocate.

It was with joy that we hailed our first approach to this man, and gradually came to know more in regard to his private life. As our acquaintance grew, we found him to be one of the rarest companions, beneath whose rugged exterior there lay a lively appreciation of all that is vivifying in nature, and a natural yearning toward his fellow-men, together with a kindly sympathy, which was but the basis of his simple philosophy. In place of affected eccentricity, we discovered in him only originality, every thought and action revealing to us a mind singularly individual, acknowledging no mode save that fashioned by the dictates of conscience, and by the inferences draws from a thoughtful contemplation of the natural world. He appeared to us more than all men to enjoy life, not for its hypocrisies, its
conventional shams and barbarisms, but for its intrinsic worth, taking great interest in everything connected with the welfare of the town, no less than delight in each changing aspect of Nature, with an instinctive love for every creature of her realm.

In this he may have found the philosopher’s-stone, or at least the pebble adjoining it, which all the world aspire to reach, yet few attain. This feature, which, as I have said, formed the predominating element in his character, was contagious. No one could approach without feeling himself irresistibly drawn yet nearer to him, for he bore his credentials for our esteem in his bronzed and honest countenance. Thus we could not fear, though we had great reverence for him, and must needs deem it the greatest privilege to associate with him. In the wood, his spirits were always most elastic and buoyant. At such times he evinced the liveliest interest in our conversation, entering into our feelings with an earnestness and warmth of sentiment which only bound us still closer to him, and taught us to look upon him rather as a glorious boy, than one who had arrived at full maturity; one whose healthy life and vigorous thought had put to flight all morbidness, leaving his mind yet unclouded by the sorrows which too often tinge the years of riper manhood.

He climbed and leaped as though he knew every “rope” of the wood, and quite shamed our efforts, the results of bars, racks, and wooden contrivances unknown to him. But he was to be to us more than a charming companion; he became our instructor, full of wisdom and consideration, patiently listening to our crude ideas of Nature’s laws and to our juvenile philosophy, not without a smile, yet in a moment ready to correct and set us right again. And so in the afternoon walk, or the long holiday jaunt, he first opened to our unconscious eyes a thousand beauties of earth and air, and taught us to admire and appreciate all that was impressive and beautiful in the natural world around us. When with him, objects before so tame acquired new life and interest. We saw no beauty in the note of veery or wood-thrush until he pointed out to us their sad yet fascinating melancholy. He taught us the rich variety of the thrasher’s song, bidding us compare with it the shrieks of the modern prima donna. The weary peep of Hyla had for us no charm until he showed us how well it consorted with the surrounding objects,—the dark pool with the andromeda weeping over it, as if in fear of the little “sea-monster.” Nor did we fancy the flaming red-wing,
the Perseus of the story, who makes his home near by, to keep the maiden company, until by his very love he caused us too to like him. Then we sought to know more of the young gallant, and saw how wonderfully well he built his home, and laughed at the grotesque markings upon the eggs. He turned our hearts toward every flower, revealing to us the haunts of rhodora and arethusa, or in the fragrant wood, half hidden by the withered leaves,

“He saw beneath dim aisles, in odorous beds,
The sweet Linnea hang its twin-born heads.”

His ear was keenly alive to musical sounds, discriminating with astonishing accuracy between the notes of various songsters. This discernment enabled him to distinguish at once the songs of many birds singing together, selecting each one with great nicety of perception. A single strain was enough for him to recall the note at once, and he always had some English translation, or carefully marked paraphrase of it, singularly expressive and unique.

His love of nature was unbounded. No subject of the animate creation was beneath his notice; no uncouth reptile, no blade of grass nor wayside weed, but it might confidently claim a share in his esteem. To him Nature seemed to speak a language clear, intelligible. He never wearied of her; but from whatever he found uncongenial and prosaic in daily life,—from the cares which must come home to him, from bereavement and sorrows,—he always returned again, with renewed devotion unto her sweet embrace.

His philosophy contained little that could be called visionary, but every tenet of it was made subservient to some practical end. He had a passion for Oriental literature, especially admiring, as he tells us, the “Bhagvat Geeta,” full of sublimity
and divine thought. From these heathen writings his keen
discernment enabled him to gather much practical good, gleaning
from them maxims which to-day may help to shape the perfect mind
and character.
It seemed part of his generous heart, that in all his researches,
he rarely injured the smallest insect, never indulging in wanton
slaughter, that he might stock cabinets, but respecting the life
of every creature. Life, with its gushing melody and happy
enjoyment, was to him far dearer than death with its "pickled
victims," designed to show every little dimension, to the extent
of a barleycorn.

"Hast thou named all the birds without a gun,
Loved the wood-rose, and left it on its stalk,—
O be my friend, and teach me to be thine!"

Nothing seems to me more touching in the life of this man than
his veneration for every little songster of the wood, which
appeared to minister to him, and answer the inmost cravings of
his nature. These were his pets, far whom he ever had a ready
sympathy, regarding them with an affection almost paternal.
Thus the good man seemed to be Nature’s child, rather than ours.
By her was he fostered, under her willing guidance he grew up,
and now within her bosom he sleeps the long sleep. From her he
learned the lesson of forbearance, of sympathy for his
fellowmen, of pity for the needy, nay, more, of godlike trust
and holy reverence. His life was moulded from a serious
contemplation of her laws, and a careful study of the world in
which he lived. For him Nature donned her costliest dress, that
he might view her in her fairest attire. Nor did he ever desert
her, but passively yielded to her charms, and suffered no rude
hand to tear him away. The freshness of spring, the long monotony
of the dreamy summer, the changing glories of autumn, and the
crisp and merry winter,—all had for him a significance deeper
than we could conceive, and lent their influence to quicken and
intensify his life.
But Nature needed him, and with firm but gentle hand broke down
his mighty strength, and with the fair May morning lifted him
away within herself. As was his life, so was his lingering
decline, and death the same beautiful dream, as it were, in which
he clung yet closer to the haunts be loved, though unable longer
to revisit them.

Here for instance is what Helen has to say about Thoreau’s observations of the Ruffed Grouse *Bonasa umbellus* that was then in New England being termed the “partridge”: “Thoreau quite naturally found most interesting those birds which he could easily observe.” –Wow, doesn’t that lead sentence help you infer how
Thoreau quite naturally found most interesting those birds which he could easily observe. Ruffed grouse were common in the varied habitat around Concord. Moreover, they could be approached close enough for good observation. Not only do the young leave the nest as soon as they are dry, but by the time they are twelve days old they can fly from twenty to thirty feet. Thoreau’s experiences with this species are enjoyed by all readers. Moreover, they can be duplicated to-day by observant bird watchers in the very same places where Thoreau watched the grouse. Not until slow-motion moving pictures were made of ruffed grouse drumming was it definitely proved that the sound was made by fanning the air with the wings, not by striking the body or perch. The pulsing throb is produced by gradually increased speed until the movements of the wings are too fast for the eye to count them, and thumps merge into a whir. The movements tilt the grouse backward until his tail is pressed tightly against the log on which he stands and when the drumming stops, he springs upward as if by recoil. Many creatures, including man, sometimes take refuge from cold by digging a shelter in the snow. Grouse have learned to fly into loose snow, or push their way backward into firm snow, for protection against severe cold. On rare occasions the snug shelter of the snow has turned into a death trap when sleet or freezing rain have formed a strong crust which the grouse cannot break so that they are held captive by the snow. The reader must have become aware of Thoreau’s habit of naming the places which he frequently visited. Often the name given was for a bird or plant characteristic of an area. Some of these names were Tanager Woods, Owl Swamp, Orchis Swamp, Bittern Cliff, Nut Meadow, Pink Azalea Woods, Trillium Woods, and Andromeda Ponds. His S. tristis Path in the section which follows might have more general appeal had he called it Dwarf Gray Willow Path instead of using the scientific name for the small shrub which grew beside this trail and at times sheltered the ruffed grouse.

And, in regard to Thoreau’s more than 40 journal comments about the red-winged blackbird Agelaius phoeniceus over almost a decade of observation, she had the following to offer:

It was an exciting moment for Thoreau, as it is for all who watch for early spring movements of birds, when the first lively flock of red-winged blackbirds arrived in Concord and began to sing loudly in a group, each singing lustily and independently of the others. Long before the plain brown females arrived, the males began to display their shoulder epaulets of glowing red. Using their voices and the display of their red shoulder patches, they attempted to claim and protect territories on which they would nest later. While their nesting places are usually in or near marshes, they may find their food in grain fields, orchards, and pastures a mile away, and as they feed, their brilliant red shoulder patches may be hidden or almost hidden behind their black feathers.
THOREAU’S RED-WING

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“It’s all now you see. Yesterday won’t be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago.”

- Remark by character “Garin Stevens” in William Faulkner’s INTRUDER IN THE DUST

Prepared: March 20, 2013
This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, upon someone’s request we have pulled it out of the hat of a pirate that has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot “Laura” (depicted above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of data modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture. This is data mining. To respond to such a request for information, we merely push a button.

“Stack of the Artist of Kouroo” Project
Commonly, the first output of the program has obvious deficiencies and so we need to go back into the data modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and do a recompile of the chronology — but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary "writerly" process which you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.
Place your requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>.
Arrgh.