

MONDAY,

BULLETINS FROM BIRDLAND

BY WINIFRED E. WILSON



MINDING EGGS

Sitting on eggs must be a tiresome chore. The mother bird generally bears this burden, though many of the fathers help out to a certain extent. Some parents actually take turns, as do the Avocets on the western alkali flats; and a very few males, for instance Wilson's Phalaropes, look after all the incubating. Each species goes about the business in its own way. The number of eggs also varies greatly. When they are laid one day, and incubating starts immediately, the bigger the clutch the longer the bird must sit. A Tanager has only one egg to attend to, but it takes more than six weeks to hatch. A Hummingbird has two. The majority of birds lay an average of perhaps four, and they take approximately two weeks. Mrs. Redwing has to sit tight only 12 days, because, although she lays one egg a day for four days, she does not begin incubating until the last one is in the nest. A Chestnut-sided Warbler, with the same number, starts incubating at once, and each takes 13 days, keeping the

bird quiet for 16. Fortunately for Mrs. Grouse, who takes full charge of her dozen eggs, the chicks all come from their shells on the same day. But they take longer to hatch than those of most perching birds, because these youngsters are born well feathered, and able to run about almost immediately. Much the same may be said for Mrs. Duck and her family. Downy ducklings, and there are occasionally 16 of them, emerge within a few hours of one another. Hawks, however, are born one a day, and each egg takes about four weeks to hatch, prolonging the sitting period.

The incubation of Grebes' eggs (and the Pied-billed may have as many as 9) is not begun until all are laid. But these water birds spend considerable time fussing about their families. They cover the eggs each time they go off to the nest, and on their return are obliged to remove all the wet leaves they put there for camouflage. Then they carefully turn each egg over, like a cook turning pancakes.

Mrs. Sora Rail is probably one of the most overworked parents in Birdland. True, incubation is not begun until the last egg is laid, but there may be 16, 17, or even 18 of them, placed in at least two layers, sometimes three. The babies do not break out until able to leave home.

The Anis of the tropics have solved the problem. Several females deposit eggs in one extremely large nest. There may be 20 eggs in four or five layers. Then responsibility of incubation is shared.

Are baby birds ever spotted?

Exit Tony Blount

by Sydney Parkman

CHAPTER XI

Continued

"This is the island, I suppose?" The doctor asked. He and Thurlow had risen to their feet.

"It's an island," the captain conceded, in tones of ruffled dignity. "It ain't Arafu, though, if that's what you mean. An' what that ape was gettin' worked up about I for I dunno! Anybody 'ud think he had never seen land before!"

He reached for a pair of binoculars and making his way aft to the combination ladder, climbed up on deck, closely followed by the other two.

The schooner heeled well over to port under a stiff sailing breeze, was slicing through the crisp seas at a good seven knots, and throwing up occasional bursts of spray over the weather bow. Clear of the stuffy heat of the saloon, there was a fine sense of exhilaration in the forward driving motion of the vessel, the thrashing sound of the water past her sides, and the humming song of the trade-wind in her taut gear.

The captain moved forward along the weather side, and bracing himself against the fore-topmast binnacle, focused his glasses straight ahead. The other two followed and came to a halt behind him, looking out over the white-flecked expanse of blue sea towards the distant horizon.

There seemed to be nothing to indicate the near presence of land, but after a second or two the captain grunted and offered the glasses to Thurlow.

"There she is," he announced, indicating a point line on the starboard bow away to the north-east—about ten miles further off. We won't pick her up yet awhile, for she don't rise so high. They reckon Ofani's about 800 feet

high at the western end now, but you never know for certain what the blame thing's goin' to do next. It's litest a couple o' hundred feet in the last few years."

Thurlow found some difficulty in picking up the object he was speaking of at all. The horizon line was hazy and indistinct, with no clear indication where sky and sea met, and it was not till he raised his field of vision above where he fancied it should be that saw it standing out clearly against the misty blue of the sky—a wedge-shaped peak, with its foot hidden from view over the curve of the horizon.

It was too far away for him to have any idea of its details, but he received the impression that it was little more than a mass of bare rock.

He turned round and handed the glasses to the doctor.

"What do you mean by saying that it has 'lifted' a couple of hundred feet?" he asked the captain, in a puzzled voice.

"Just what I say," that worthy returned. "That island hops a round like a wallaby. About fifty years ago, when it was first took notice of, it was a mile long an' about six hundred feet high at this end. Then it sank till it was 'n' no more than a reef; an' just before the war it dipped under altogether. I dunno how long it was out o' sight, but presently it takes it into its head to come up again, and be '27, when a Navy sloop landed a party on it, it was just about the same size as it was at first. But since then it's kept on

growin', an' the last I heard of it, it was about two miles long an' eight hundred foot high."

"It is volcanic, then?" the doctor asked.

"It's all volcanic around here," the captain told him. "There's a regular shoal patch between Ofani an' Arafu, that's thick with coral der cones an' bits o' rock an' coral heads. It runs a good bit north, too, but there's deep water right up to Arafu on the south an' east. If it wasn't for that, you wouldn't get no one to go there, for there's been a good few hookers piled up on that lot, takin' it all round. Not so much down at this end o' the shoal maybe, but further north, where it stretches up towards Tonga."

"Then Arafu is volcanic too, I suppose?" Thurlow suggested.

"In a way I s'pose it is," the captain admitted. "But it's older, if you know what I mean. Ofani an' them other places is still just on that lot, but you get bush an' palms an' that on Arafu. It's a regular island, like you get anywhere else, with a barrier reef an' everything. An' there's been folks on there for donkey's years. They was there when it was first sighted, and they say Bully Hayes called in there once for recruits in the blackbird days." He stared out in the direction of the distant island "We'll have to bring her up another point or two to get a clear offing. There's a northerly set to the current around here, an' if the wind was to die on us when we was abeam o' the shoal, we'd drift right on to it."

To be continued

BURGESS BEDTIME

Continued from page 10

That he is their father.

That tree was not one of the tallest, or biggest in that part of the Green Forest. It was just as well that this was so. Buster was so big, so heavy, that he couldn't safely climb where the upper part of the tree became smaller and smaller. Taddy was so small, that he could get close to the slender top. There he clung. He was bawling now. How he did wish that that tree were taller so that he could keep right on climbing. Of course, it is foolish to wish for things that cannot be. But he wished still more for mother. He was sure that mother could save him from this dreadful stranger below him.

The dreadful stranger had climbed as high as he could. More than one branch had broken beneath his weight. The trunk of the tree had become too small for him to climb any higher. He looked up at Taddy Bear out of his reach, but only a little out of his reach. It was provoking. Yes, sir, it was provoking. It made him angrier than ever. Taddy Bear, looking down, saw that Buster was no longer climbing, and began to have a little hope.

"Mama! Mama! Mama!" bawled Taddy Bear.

Then suddenly a dreadful thing happened. Anyway, it seemed dreadful to the little Bear. The top of that tree was beginning to swing back and forth, very much as if a great wind was making

it swing. But there was no wind. There was no wind at all. The little Bear was having hard work to hang on. He had stopped bawling now. He was too occupied in trying to cling to the small top of that tree. He was being thrown back and forth now. If he had been a little lower down, he would have been better off. There would have been more to cling to.

Of course, you have guessed what was happening. Buster Bear was trying to shake that little Bear loose. With some trees, he couldn't have done this. But this tree had a slender trunk, and was of the limber kind. For a few minutes Taddy Bear managed to hang on. Then, one paw slipped. A moment later, he was tumbling heels over

head, bumping on one limb after another, on his way to the ground. That really was a lucky thing for Taddy Bear, for each limb he hit, broke his fall. He landed with a thump, and for a moment all the breath was knocked out of him. But he wasn't really hurt. Little Bears are loose jointed. Sometimes when they are climbing down from a tree, they do not wait to get right to the bottom, but just drop. No one knows how to fall without getting hurt better than does a Bear. Taddy Bear heard a noise up above him; he looked up. Buster was scampering down. Taddy Bear got to his feet and ran to his life. He was headed straight for the home den under the great windfall.

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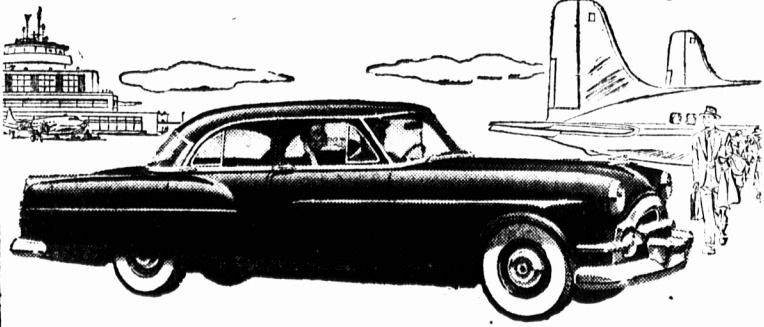
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