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7 neg from Finley?*

CHERRY, A CEDAR WAXWING

by

Irene Finley
Photographs by William L. Finley

Everybody gets in a jam some time in his life - usually many times - and sits dumb and staring until he can collect his wits and escape his dilemma. This is a story of a half fledged cedar waxwing that had just lived through one breath-taking experience in his short life, only to fall smack into another.

He had just taken the leap out into the big world from a bulky twig nest, after rather forceful persuasion of his parents, and had hardly got his wind from the parachute jump. Being jittery and with wings unaccustomed to their first air adventure, he had made a crash landing plop under the torrent of water from a whirling lawn sprinkler. He couldn't "Glug-Glug" much longer under this down-pour.

It was fortunate that young Jim Lewis sauntered along the walk just about this time and rescued the sippy little mite. Soon Jim's sister, Margaret, and her playmate, Anne Finley, came upon the scene and were about as much excited as if it was the advent of a human baby in the family. The Lewises adopted him immediately, took him in the house and offered him several kinds of food that should have been acceptable to a stranded waif. But the bird would have none of it. Doubtfully he was offered a piece of ripe cherry, and that went down the red mouth in a hurry. From then on he was called "Cherry". At the time, they didn't know how appropriate this name was, for the waxwing is called "cherry bird."

Coming from a genteel, demure bird family, with no excitable mannerisms, Cherry immediately became a lovable member of the household. He cuddled in a hand or under an ear for warmth, uttering his musical little chitter of contentment and comfort. He was so good-natured and guileless that he even allowed the girls to molly-coddle him and stuff him almost to bursting. Jim was quite proud of his little pal. He built him a fancy little perch,

something like a miniature love-nest, two little trays with a lowered seat fastened between them at just the right level so that all that he had to do was to turn his head and eat cherries on one side, or raspberries on the other. It looked like training him to be a lazy epicure - and almost succeeded. Even if his chest was bulging with food, he couldn't resist opening his mouth wide if somebody would poke some more down. He sat like a king on his throne and waited for his tables to be re-filled. If they became empty, he just sat hunched and called for service - quick, urgent service.

There was one fly in the ointment of this happy scene. The Lewis family had a cat concerning whose firmly entrenched place in the household there was no question. He had a previous priority and was a well behaved feline. But he couldn't help casting greedy eyes at this newcomer that made his mouth water, and perhaps a chance for a real taste. So, with regret, Cherry was boarded out in a catless family that enticed all the birds possible to live in their yard. Much to his discredit, he didn't seem to mourn at this exile or even notice the change of care-takers.

He was a little older now and taking on the family crest of fawn color, the black cheek patches, and richer colors of dress, the olive-gray back, under parts pale with yellow flanks, bright yellow band on his tail, and the wax-like red wing badges, the symbols of his race. His menu was enlarged now to contain also bits of ripe cantaloup, hard-boiled egg yolk for vitamins, and sometimes a few insects, especially a choice beetle that he picked up when he was outdoors. But ripe, red cherries remained his favorite dish.

One day a flock of cedar waxwings arrived and settled in a thick tree in the yard. They talked softly as if carrying on a conversation. When they moved to another tree, it was in a compact regiment. They staid about the place for a few days, and then moved on, for the cedar waxwings are wanderers. Cherry had been childishly excited to hear the voices of his own race. He searched the trees with his black eyes, lifted his head and chattered back

at them. When they had gone, he settled back to his humdrum family life. Later when he was older, he would remember and go with the flock when they came through.

One female cedar bird remained about the yard after the rest had gone, and we wondered at it. But she did not linger long. A few days after, investigating the rosebushes on the wire fence of the tennis court, we found five waxwing eggs in an old song sparrow's nest. ^{So} ~~She~~ this was the reason she staid behind. Too bad. It was her one chance of the year to make a home and have children, for the waxwing is supposed to have but one brood in a season. Stanley Jewett was called in and confirmed the identification of the eggs in the sparrow's nest, and now has both of them in his collection.

No P The eggs were dull bluish-gray with clear black spots on one end.

The "cherry birds" sometimes cause complaint by orchardists, but it is usually local and short-lived. In fall they love the red berries of the wild current and huckleberry, and even the catoneasters in the yard. And the amount and speed with which they can put them down are astounding. Also at this time of year, a flock will hang around the grape arbor, gorging on the fallen, over-ripe grapes which are practically raisins, and some fermented. They chitter excitedly and seem to be having a real party, perhaps a jag.

The bird breeds from central British Columbia, central Alberta, central Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and Cape Breton Island south to northern California, New Mexico, Kansas, Northern Arkansas, and North Carolina. It winters south to Central America. In Oregon, it is a permanent resident and breeding species throughout the State, where it frequents stream bottoms.