



New Burlington Depot at Omaha.

The Scarlet Tanager.

The Scarlet Tanager is one of the most brilliantly plumaged birds we have. As he flits about amid the green foliage of the trees, his bright scarlet feathers trimmed with jet, give him the appearance of a fire brand darting through the air. Though not a common bird in this part of the state, we may, by seeking for scarlet tanagers, find them occasionally in the more secluded parts of the woods, near any of our creeks, where the trees and vines are most dense. I have found more of them near Emerald than any other place around Lincoln. While the Scarlet Tanager is not one of our best singers, yet, his notes are soft, mellow and pleasing, and rather subdued, quite different from the clear piping flint-like notes of the orioles. He has a shy disposition and one must, in order to enjoy his society, approach him cautiously, for at the snapping of dry twigs under foot or the brushing of branches he is off, and after he has been once alarmed we may find it difficult to make his acquaintance.

These beautiful birds are not as good architects as many of our other birds. They build their little homes with small roots and grass rather loosely woven together, and when standing under the nest and looking up toward it, if Mrs. Tanager is not at home busily engaged with her household duties, you can see the light shining through between the loosely woven fibers. The eggs, three to five in number, are of a dull, greenish blue color. The first year and part of the second the plumage of the young is like that of the female, a light olive color; after the second year the young males gradually assume the bright scarlet colors of the old male bird. The color of the male Tanager in full plumage is a bright scarlet gradually shading down the breast to a dark brilliant red, the wings and tail are jet black, making a strong contrast to the bright red colors. They have a large, strong, thick beak, which they use to good advantage in cracking the hard seeds they feed on. They are also fond of small fruits, wild grapes and elder berries. The attachment of the parent birds for their young is very strong, as shown by Wilson's account of his experience with a young bird: "One day while passing through an orchard, and seeing one of those birds that had but lately left the nest, I carried it with me to show to a friend a half mile away, and having procured a cage, hung it up in a tree near the nest of an orchard oriole, which also contained young. I was hopeful that the charity and kindness of the orioles would induce them to supply the cravings of the stranger. But charity with them, as with too many of the human race, began and ended at home. The poor orphan was altogether neglected. Notwithstanding its plaintive cries, and as it refused to be fed by me I was about to return it to the place where I found it, when toward evening a Scarlet Tanager, no doubt its parent, was seen fluttering round the cage, endeavoring to get in, finding this impossible he flew off and soon returned with food in his bill and continued to feed it till sunset, taking up his lodgings on the higher branches of the same tree. In the morning, almost as soon as day-break he was again seen most actively engaged in the same affectionate manner, and notwithstanding the insolence of the orioles, continued his benevolent offices the whole day, roosting at night as before. On the third day he appeared extremely solicitous for the liberation of his charge, using every call and invention that nature had put in his power for him to come out." This was too much for my venerable friend, he procured a ladder and mounting to where the bird was suspended, opened the cage, took out the prisoner and restored him to liberty, and his parent who, with notes of great exultation, accompanied him in his flight to the woods.

AUG. EICHE.