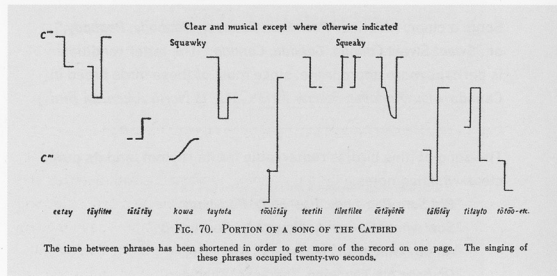




3. GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*)



CATBIRDS ARE OFTEN great imitators of other birds. ... One individual I studied imitated seventeen different species, sixteen birds and a tree-toad.

The common call note of the Catbird, also used as an alarm note, is the cat-like "mayow," slurred downward, from which it gets its name.

(Diagrams and text, ARETAS A. SAUNDERS, *A Guide to Bird Songs*)

Catlike mewing, distinctive. Song, disjointed notes and phrases. (*Peterson Guide*)

Song mimics other birds', each version given only once; calls include catlike "meeow" and "kwut." (*Stokes Field Guide*)

Long, irregular succession of musical and mechanical notes and phrases; a cat-like mewing. Sometimes seems to mimic other birds. (*The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds*)

There is a certain lawless freedom to the song of the Catbird which invests it with a character essentially wild. The bird does not appear to entertain any regard for set rhythm; he proceeds with a series of miscellaneous, interrupted sentences which bear no relationship with one another. The fact is, he is an imitator, and possibly does not know himself exactly what he is talking about, or what impression he will embody in "the next line." He can imitate anything from a squeaking cart-wheel to the song of a Thrush. ... The yowl of a cat is thrown in anywhere, the guttural sounds of the frog are repeated without the slightest deference to good taste or appropriateness, and the harsh squawk of the old hen, or the chirp of the lost chicken, is always added in some mal à propos manner. All is grist which comes to the Catbird's musical mill, and all is ground out according to the bird's own way of thinking. ... His song is no ordinary one; it is like some long rigmarole the drift of which is humorously incomprehensible, though the bird apparently considers his remarkable strophes both serious and important. ... [His] song is refined, sprightly, and interesting although disjointed, jumbled, and lacking in melody.

(SCHUYLER F. MATHEWS, *Field Book of Wild Birds and Their Music*)