

“A Fishing Party”
by Thornton Burgess

“I never knew before how handsome Rattles is,” thought Peter. He was about the size of Yellow Wing the Flicker, but his head made him look bigger than he really was. The feathers on top of his head stood up in a crest, as if they had been brushed the wrong way. His head, back, wings and tail were a bluish-gray. His throat was white and he wore a white collar. In front of each eye was a little white spot. Across his chest was a belt of bluish-gray, and underneath he was white. There were tiny spots of white on his wings and on his tail. His bill was black and, like that of Longlegs,

was long, stout, and sharp. It looked almost too big for his size.

Presently Rattles flew out and plunged into the Smiling Pool, this time, very near to where Longlegs was patiently waiting. He caught a fish, for it is not often that Rattles misses. It was smaller than the first one Peter had seen him catch. This time as soon as he got back to the Big Hickory-tree, he swallowed it without thumping it against the branch. As for Longlegs, he looked thoroughly put out. For a moment he stood glaring angrily up at Rattles. When Rattles had plunged so close to Longlegs he had frightened all the fish. Finally Longlegs seemed to make up his mind that there was room

for but one fisherman at a time at the Smiling Pool. Spreading his great wings, folding his long neck back on his shoulders, and dragging his long legs out behind him, he flew heavily away in the direction of the Big River.

Rattles remained long enough to catch another little fish, and with a harsh rattle flew down the Laughing Brook. “I would know him anywhere by that rattle,” thought Peter. “There isn’t any one who can make a noise anything like it. I wonder where he has gone to now. He must have a nest, but I haven’t the least idea what kind of a nest he builds. Hello! There’s Grandfather Frog over on his green lily pad. Perhaps he can tell me.”