

some of our summer visitors return to us early, and many of those which summer further north, stop on their way during the days of early spring.

The teacher's responsibility to develop the interest in the facts and beauties of nature here finds an interesting and pleasing avenue of exercise. The beauty of plumage and song of many of our birds, the habits of gathering food, life around the nest and care of the young, together with their interesting mode of location, appeal to the imagination and the beauty-loving side of any child's nature. Just a little care is needed to stimulate the pupil's hearty enthusiasm for Bird Study.

Bird Study has two values. The first and most obvious is the aesthetic. A sympathetic appreciation of natural beauty can find no better nor more gratifying field of activity. The large number of bird stories found in the folklore of any people shows the appeal of birds to the imagination.

Bird Study also has economic value. Few of us realize the value of birds to the farmer and to the city dweller, as well, until we read the reports of investigations made by scientists upon the food of birds. By study of the actual contents of the stomachs of thousands of birds these men are able to affirm that few species of birds are actually harmful to crops and trees, while many species of birds are actually beneficial. From the study of 100 species of the more common birds 4 per cent were found to be injurious, 5 per cent. neutral, 13 per cent chiefly beneficial to man and 78 per cent. wholly beneficial.

One species of bird which is severely maligned for stealing cultivated fruit is the robin. The study of the robin's food showed that 42.4 per cent was animal food, insects of 223 varieties, 57.6 per cent. was vegetable; of this only 8 per cent was cultivated fruit. When the farmer loses a few cherries he must remember the many insects eaten by the robin, which, if unmolested, would do much greater harm. Such facts as these convince us all of the value of bird study.

A LEAGUE FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

With the recurrence of Arbor Day our attention is turned to the school premises. In some cases the prospect is rather discouraging. Years of neglect and cursory care by the community have left a rather dog-eared school house and a grassless, weedy school yard. Along the fence there are a few trees, the whole movement of former attempts to improve the surroundings.

We have too long been accustomed to this forsaken looking place to realize just how depressing it is. No wonder the school-boy creeps "like a snail" as he approaches it. If we could but get a glimpse of the change, that could be wrought by the expenditure of a few dol-

lars and some effort, we would commit ourselves to the task of improving our school-grounds.

The State of Maine realized that with a few suggestions the people of a community would throw themselves enthusiastically into the task of improving the school-building and its surroundings. To this purpose they organized a League in 1898 called the School Improvement League of Maine, whose object is three-fold. "to make the local school the centre of local community interest; to improve the local physical conditions of the school; to help to provide school libraries, pictures and supplementary equipment." The school-house should serve as the general meeting place of all community interests. Here all the citizens should meet on common ground regardless of social, economic or religious differences. The physical surroundings include both the requirements of a hygienic building, but beautiful grounds as well.

By the constitution of this League: "The object of this organization shall be to unite the pupils, teachers and friends of the school in an effort to help and improve it, to make it the greatest possible service to all the community." Its membership shall be open to "pupils, teachers and friends of the school who are willing to subscribe to the objects" mentioned in the above quotation. The income is to be derived "from such entertainments as may be given by the League and from the voluntary contributions of the members and friends of the school. There shall be no required assessments." The rest of the constitution deals with the officers and reports of the League.

Some such organization might well serve in some of Maritime Province communities.

BIRD HOUSES BOYS CAN BUILD.

This morning I was awakened by a cardinal whistling in a near-by tree top and sparrows chattering on a neighboring roof. Through the song and the chatter sounded a new note of hopefulness as the sun rose bright and clear. In last year's flower beds are seen the tips of early tulip leaves and on every hand the coming of spring is evident.

This is the time to prepare for the return of the birds, and to help them find proper homes to rear their families. Of the many varieties of birds, only a small number will nest in homes built for them and these can be attracted most successfully if the houses meet certain specifications. Wrens, blue birds, martins, and sometimes robins, fly catchers and flickers are most likely to accept hospitality.

In general bird houses vary in area of floor space, depth, diameter of opening, and material used for construction, depending upon the kind of bird for whom the house is built. Houses made of old and weathered