

but do not eat the larger ones when smaller are available, instead merely squeezing their heads as if desirous that they should be killed at all events.

These are the ploughman's more constant company, but occasionally he will have a graceful flock of gulls as his guests—voracious feeders upon every insect exposed, and a large flock will soon devour all specimens in sight.

In my personal experience, however, I have found crows to be by far the most persistent in their search for insects. They will literally live and feed their young upon cutworms from a badly infested locality, locating the grubs by means of the upheavals so characteristically left when one is working near the surface. Another favourite diet is made up of army-worms when present. During a local outbreak near my home, in 1913, I found that of all birds, crows were most in evidence at this time (August). As is well known, crows in autumn generally collect into large flocks, often of many thousands. One such flock, estimated at 3,000, visited the army-worms daily, particularly when they were crossing a road. Several infested fields were also located by the crows' guidance, the birds having forsaken all other food and flown several miles to partake of these caterpillars. The birds remained on the fields for some weeks after the larvæ had pupated, undoubtedly picking up these latter from beneath clods of earth, etc., which they are experts at turning over and habitually do so in search of insects. How many army-worms a flock of 3,000 crows would devour in two weeks, I will leave my readers to judge.

In describing some of the good qualities of crows, I do not wish it to be thought that I thus acquit them of all crimes. The crow is often a thief, helping himself to a farmer's corn, as readily as he will to eggs or young poultry when opportunity offers. To those of us who have watched his habits carefully, however, the good deeds seem to far outweigh the bad. And, therefore, I include him as an undoubted friend.

Another type of birds, frequently overlooked as destroyers of insects, but preserved at certain seasons on account of their food value and the sport they supply to hunters, are the various species of grouse.

To those who have lived in their breeding areas, it is noticeable that the yearly increase of Prairie Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Papediæctes p. campestris*) in the prairie provinces fluctuates from year to year, the variation in numbers, apart from the devastation caused by gunners, being largely due to the food supply, the food in question consisting chiefly of grasshoppers.

Observation shows that an outbreak of locusts is nearly always followed by the successful maturing of a large number