

PROTECTION.

In food habits, birds are eminently adaptable; seeds, plants, fruit, insects, flesh, or fish are all acceptable to various species and, consequently, nearly all regions have their quota of appropriate birds. A bird lives fast, its heart beats more rapidly than that of other animals, the blood temperature is higher, and it consumes an enormous amount of energy in flight. This feverish heat and strenuous exertion requires a correspondingly large amount of food, consequently the bird as an economic factor is one to be regarded seriously. Though it may be an exaggeration to say, as some writers have inferred, that the whole balance of nature depends upon birds and that without them the country would be a barren waste peopled only by insects, yet birds cannot be seriously reduced in number without the gravest results. The destruction of tons of weed-seeds and millions of insects must necessarily have a great influence upon human welfare and neglect of this fact must seriously react upon any community that fails to give proper protection to its birds.

However, the problem of the status of individual species of birds is not the simple thing that it superficially appears to be. More than a cursory examination is necessary and many things must be considered in order to arrive at the truth. Sometimes birds work in harmony with human welfare and sometimes against it. They may be directly beneficial at one season and harmful at another, or their indirect influence may alter the sum of their direct effects in a most surprising manner.

General impressions then as to whether a bird is beneficial or harmful require careful checking. Mere casual observation in life is never sufficient to determine even its food supply. Modern practice bases such conclusions almost entirely upon the examination of the stomach contents of wild birds taken throughout the year, which is the only evidence that is not subject to question. In this work the United States Biological Survey has examined and passed upon thousands of bird stomachs and the results of its researches are available to those who care to study and use them.

As one of the factors in the delicate balance of nature birds should be respected.

There are certain birds which from their size, habits, and general food value are regarded as legitimate game. The pursuit of these is invigorating sport and tends to the healthful welfare of the sportsman, teaching woodcraft, hardihood, out of door adaptability, and marksmanship. The true sportsman has a code of ethics of his own founded upon economic as well as humanitarian principles. He shoots nothing without giving it a fair chance and little that cannot be used as food. He is also careful not to deplete the game upon which his future sport depends. Restrictive measures have invariably followed rather than preceded the results that have made them necessary, the regulations that are enacted to-day should have been adopted yesterday and the consequence is that over much of the country, game is a thing of the past.

MEANS OF ATTRACTING BIRDS.

To anyone interested in birds, the pleasure of having them about the house and garden where they can be observed at leisure, is a very great enjoyment. A small garden patch can be made attractive to many species