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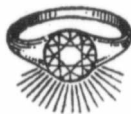


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agricultural purposes because of their destruction of insects, one hundred million dollars each year in the United States.

The robin is one of the first birds to come in the early spring, and most boys and girls recognize this pretty red-breasted visitor at a glance. The robin steals cherries and strawberries and other products of the farm and garden; but watch him in a freshly plowed field or in your yard and see what he is doing. Evidently he is working eagerly for his dinner, and cherries and strawberries do not grow in such places; he is seeking his food among the insects; and grubs and caterpillars, crickets, grasshoppers and other smaller forms make up the larger part of his meal. These are the forms which are most harmful to the grain, and so should you kill a robin you would kill one of your best friends. If you get up early enough in the morning you may find him hunting for cut-worms. These worms do their harmful work in the night, and the robin knows that if he gets any cut-worms for breakfast he must be up early. If a single robin destroys so many harmful insects for his own use, how many more do you think he will destroy when he has a family to feed? Did you ever see a nest full of young robins, with their great mouths wide open? Notice the kind of food the old birds give them. Are they fed cherries and fruit, or worms and bugs? Do not take any person's word for this, but see for yourself. For what I want is not to tell you things, but to have you see things. The old robin is kept busy hunting worms and insects for the little ones in the nest. Try to find how many times in an hour the old bird brings food to the nest. A young robin requires each day, more than its own weight of animal food.

Another early bird is the blue-bird, which has the good qualities of the robin without any of his questionable ones. You may find him eating some vegetable food in the fall, but for the most part he eats insects, chiefly harmful ones, especially those that are injurious to trees. One of our common birds, which some thoughtless boys are fond of shooting, is the meadow-lark, one of the farmer's most efficient helpers. Its food is chiefly beetles, caterpillars and grasshoppers, varied by an occasional diet of seeds. At the Department of Agriculture at Washington, the contents of the stomach of a meadow-lark were examined, and 54 grasshoppers were found. If one meadow-lark eats 50 grasshoppers in a day, and there are 20 meadow-larks to the square mile in your region, how many grasshoppers will these 20 meadow-larks destroy in a month? A grasshopper weighs about 15 grains and eats about its own weight of vegetable food each day; how much vegetation would the grasshoppers have destroyed in a square mile had they not been destroyed by the meadow-lark?

There are several kinds of birds in the West belonging to the wood-pecker family. We have the downy wood-pecker, the hairy wood-pecker (commonly known as sap-suckers), the yellow bellied wood-pecker, which is the true sap-sucker, the yellow hammer, and others not so common. All these birds, with perhaps the exception of the yellow-bellied wood-pecker, are of great value to the farmer. Their food is largely made up of insects injurious to trees. The health of forest trees depends largely on the wood-peckers. The oak is the home of five hundred kinds of insects, all more or less injurious to it. Other trees are the homes of large numbers of insects, but none have quite so many resident enemies as the oak.

The true sap-sucker or yellow-bellied wood-pecker, may do some harm to young trees, because of the holes he drills in the trunk and the resulting loss of sap. But even in this case it is a question whether the good done does not more than balance the evil. The sweet sap as it comes to the surface attracts insects, and as they become entangled in the sticky fluid they fall an easy prey to the sap-sucker and other insect-loving birds. You can always tell if the true sap-sucker has been at work. The holes he drills are in a straight row right

around the trunk; the holes drilled by the other wood-peckers are scattered. At any rate this bird which may possibly be harmful is only a summer resident, while the other wood-peckers spend the entire year with us. The wood-pecker family should be carefully guarded and every boy and girl should know about these good friends of man.

Were you ever given a gun to keep the blackbirds out of a freshly-planted field? If so, you were given a foolish thing to do. When the blackbirds first come in the spring they usually are compelled to eat grain until the ground is broken by the plow, but this grain is usually the waste grain upon the ground. As soon as the soil is turned by the plow and the blackbirds can secure animal food, they become so eager to secure every grub and larval form exposed by the plow that they will come within a few feet of the man who is plowing. Much of the corn planted would be destroyed by insects were it not for this preliminary work of the blackbird in ridding the soil of grubs.

The crow has a bad reputation; he picks up corn that the farmer has planted. But what is he doing the remainder of the year? Corn is not being constantly planted. His food is made up of insects, largely grasshoppers. Taking the entire year, the crow is of great service to the farmer, and his destruction would be a serious injury to agriculture. The cat-bird, the barn-swallow, and even the jay-bird are helpful. The more you know of these feathered tenants of the farm, the more will you regard them as friends deserving our careful protection.

Generally the sight of an owl or a hawk is the signal to run for the gun in the hope of killing it or at least driving it from the farm. Yet only a few of the large birds of prey are injurious. These larger ones destroy poultry and game birds and perhaps are rightfully killed. But the screech-owl, the barn-owl and the sparrow-hawk are among our best friends. Their favorite foods are mice and the larger insects. Some of our crops are dependent on the presence of the smaller owls and hawks.

Probably there are two hundred different kinds of birds in your country. How many of them are harmful? Suppose you watch closely for a year and make a list of all the birds that harm man in any way. You will be surprised to find how short the list will be. The birds have a right to live, and every farmer's boy ought to protect them carefully. If all the birds were destroyed, within three years there would be an insect to every square inch of this great land of ours. Does not this give enough reason for the protection of birds?—Lillian Snyder.

AN IRISH TRAGEDY

In a small village in Ireland the mother of a soldier met the village priest, who asked her if she had bad news.

"Shure, I have," she said. "Pat has been killed."

"Oh, I am very sorry," said the priest. "Did you receive word from the War Office?"

"No," she said, "I received word from himself."

The priest looked perplexed, and said, "But how is that?"

"Shure," she said, "here is the letter, read it for yourself."

The letter said: "Dear Mother—I am now in the Holy Land."—Tit-Bits.

AFTER THE PARTY

Several members of a woman's war-working party had assembled at the house of another member, and were chatting with the little daughter of their hostess.

"I hear you are a great help to your mother?" said one.

"Oh, yes," replied the little girl, "mamma gives me a task to do every day."

"Oh," remarked the lady, "and what is your task for to-day?"

"I have to count the spoons after you have all gone."

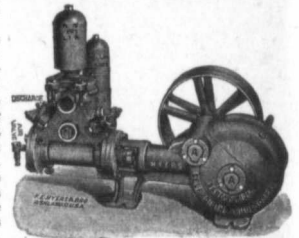
"Dear Joe.—Come home. Forgive and forget. I have destroyed the book of war recipes.—Violet."

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