

assumed that they are working injury. A careful field study of their food habits, and an examination of the stomach contents, would reveal the fact that these birds are destroying thousands upon thousands of injurious insects, particularly those which burrow in the wood. The orchardist sees the Robins carrying off a few of his cherries, and immediately some thoughtless boy brings out the shotgun, with the result that dozens of these hard working friends are destroyed. In all probability, had it not been for these birds, there would have been no cherries ; insects would have completely destroyed the foliage and fruit.

Definite information regarding the food habits of birds can be obtained only as a result of careful study and field observations, together with the examination of a large number of stomachs. A study along these lines frequently results in a complete change in our attitude towards the species under investigation. For instance, in the case of the Downy Woodpecker, an examination of a large number of stomachs revealed the fact that 13 per cent. of the food consumed, consisted of wood-boring beetles, 16 per cent. of bugs that live on the fruit and foliage, and a large proportion of the remainder is made up of scale insects, ants, and other such insects.

We might thus speak of all our common birds, and show that most of them are entirely beneficial ; and, as to the rest, their depredations are very small when compared with the beneficial service which they render to the gardner and orchardist. Farmers each year spend much time and money in keeping up the fight with aggressive and persistent weeds. Seldom do they realize that their efforts would be of little avail, were it not for the many varieties of birds which each year destroy millions upon millions of weed-seeds.

Birds have enormous appetites, and, as digestion is rapid, a large quantity of food is consumed each year. They eat during three hundred and sixty-five days of the year, so that, even though they do treat themselves to an occasional feed of luscious fruit, during two weeks of the year, we may rest assured that during the other fifty weeks they are with us they have rendered us services valuable far beyond the injury.

If the birds were destroyed, it is very doubtful whether after ten years a farmer or gardener could possibly bring any crop to maturity.

---