

a rule it is a bird of the plains and probably reaches its greatest abundance in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. In these provinces it flocks over the prairies in search of food, gathering in all manner of seeds from plants protruding above the snow. On the approach of storms the prairies are abandoned for more sheltered situations and it is then that we have the visitations around the farm buildings; at times in such numbers as to almost rival the fast falling snowflakes from which the birds take their name. At such times they gather about the farm-yard and subsist upon the seeds of weeds sticking up above the snow or pick up such as are brought to view by the fury of the wind, and, as the weather clears once more they return to their usual haunts upon the open country. In Manitoba they reach us from the north, during the middle of October and leave again in late April, a few remaining well into May.

In this age of practical knowledge something more is required, however, than mere statements. We are asked to look upon the economic side of things, be they what they may, and therefore if we wish to picture, however lightly, a bird's life we must not forget its value in dollars and cents. A casual observer would probably describe a Snowflake as a bird of small value economically, which fed chiefly upon the wild seeds found about the prairies. There are other opinions, however, and some individuals actually go so far as to advocate a general war of extermination on the grounds of injury to grain, both in the stack and when it is sprouting in the fields during spring time. We will, therefore, endeavour to present the evidence.

To begin with, Snowflakes reach us as I have already related, about the middle of October. They then congregate largely upon ploughed fields or cultivated land. What fall wheat there is growing is already too far advanced to be damaged, and as there is no other crop, so far as I am aware, to be injured, the birds must occupy themselves at this time in picking up either useless material, such as spilt grain or weed seeds, and as there is no grain on summerfallow, land much frequented by snow birds, and as weed seeds are nearly always present, we must conclude that it is these which are being eaten. In winter time as the snow becomes deep the birds desert the ploughed fields and gather more upon stubble land and prairies. It is at this time that they have been accused of collecting around grain stacks and destroying them. But, here again the evidence appears much exaggerated. Supposing the birds do gather upon stacks, and this is not a common habit, the most they could do would be to destroy the top sheaves, amounting in all to not more than half a dozen on each stack. Not a very great loss, even supposing them to be fit for feed, which, as a matter of fact,