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THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS IN AND AROUND OTTAWA*

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It is the purpose of this address to discuss, first, the general question of the protection of birds and the reasons why this is necessary; secondly, the economic value of certain common birds which we desire to protect; and thirdly, a proposal for the protection of the native birds around Ottawa.

The motives behind the widespread and increasing movement respecting the protection of our native birds may be included in two classes, namely, sentimental and practical. Most people, even in this material age, are sensible of feelings of affection towards our birds and are delighted when the return of the first spring migrants announces the termination of our long birdless winter. But the practical considerations underlying the movement are not so generally appreciated and for that reason æsthetic feelings will be assumed and the practical motives discussed.

Few people realize the place of insect pests in the general economy of life, but when it is understood that were it not for their controlling factors insects would in a few years destroy every form of vegetation, and consequently all animal life on the face of the globe, the significance of such controlling factors will be appreciated. In the United States it is estimated on a conservative basis that the annual loss on agricultural and forest products is about eight hundred million dollars (\$800,000,000). I have estimated that in Canada, on our field crops alone, the minimum annual loss due to injurious insects cannot be less than fifty million dollars; this does not take into account the enormous aggregate cost of controlling insect pests. And yet the most valuable insecticidal agencies we have are not only not encouraged but in many cases ruthlessly destroyed. Such a short-sighted and wasteful policy cannot and must not be continued.

*Abstract of an illustrated lecture delivered before the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club, 10th February, 1914.