

OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS

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ON the briny waters which skirt our Island coast and indent our gently undulating land with numerous bays, and send far inland the smoothly flowing streams forming our rivers, may be seen many species of the alert and suspicious duck. After Winter has withdrawn his icy shackles, but particularly during the seasons of migration, they float on the water, move with ease and grace through it, or in rapid flight pass from one place to another over its surface. Some seek the open waters of the bays, and the more expansive though more turbulent, gulf; others prefer the quieter and less exposed rivers, with their sheltered coves and limpid streams.

Some species are abundant, others are rare. Of the latter we see but few, and them, perhaps, at distant intervals, and there are some species which at no time visit our shores. Rarely is one seen during the Winter, and then only on the sea where a rift in the encircling icy expanse gives it an opportunity to obtain its food.

The bill of a duck is lamellate, which means that the mandibles are furnished with a series of plates or saw-toothed projections and these projections fit into one another. By means of them a duck can hold the small crustaceans, fishes, and other marine animals and vegetables which largely constitute its food.

The Mergansers have narrow, almost round, bills and the lamellæ are pointed and recurved or bent back, a structure which aids them in holding securely the fishes which they seize under water. They are expert divers and can with ease swim a great distance