

## WINTER BIRDS AND THEIR PROTECTION

What Has Been Done in Some States Might Be Done Here.

### WILD FOWL DISAPPEARING.

Interesting Facts Concerning Such Utah Birds as Have Not Yet Been Extirpated.

In view of what has been said in these articles concerning the need for the protection of the native wild birds and the destruction of the English sparrow, the following recommendations are suggested for the consideration of town councils throughout the state:

1.—That within the town itself any grove or public park should have as its leading regulation that it is a misdemeanor to harm any native bird, to destroy any nest, or even to carry any flapper or other weapon into these parks.

2.—That all the land about certain lakes or streams should be declared a game reserve and the carrying of firearms or the shooting of birds and waterfowl thereon strictly prohibited.

3.—That the extermination of the English sparrow by means of poisoned grain as described in a previous article should be definitely undertaken by town authorities and county commissioners under the state statute.

It is likely that in Salt Lake City if Liberty park were thus protected, many of the native birds now banished by persecution would return and increase in numbers. Ogden, Provo, Logan, and other towns containing similar groves of trees could do the same thing. Probably all the shores of Utah lake, Sevier lake, Fish lake, Bear lake and Salt lake should be declared game and bird preserves, and the shooting of wild fowl prohibited within a mile of the waterline. In this way the waterfowl would multiply and become tame.

### TO ENFORCE THE LAW.

We have laws protecting many of the wild birds; but the laws are not enforced. Every road supervisor, water-master, police officer, marshal, and in fact all city and county officers should be empowered to enforce the laws for



BIRDS STILL COMMON HERE.

1. Great American Shrike, or Butcher Bird. 2. Pine Grosbeak. 3. Ruby Crowned Wren. 4. Shore Lark. These birds appear to resist the English sparrow better than most other species; but even these are no longer abundant.

The protection of our bird allies, and should be given directions as to how to proceed. There is no excuse for the killing of any of our smaller wild birds, and the hunting season for the game birds requires more restriction or the law needs better enforcement.

### PROTECTING THE WILD FOWL.

The native wild species of ducks are rapidly disappearing. In most states the market supply is already threatened. Minnesota, a state in which ducks abound, prohibits not only their export but also their sale within the state. Such radical legislation in a state where only a few years ago waterfowl were abundant on every lake and waterway shows how great is the danger of the disappearance of the native wild fowl. Spring shooting must be abolished and the sale of wild fowl limited to the states where killed if the water fowl are to be preserved. Take one instance—the wood duck, one of the handsomest of our native birds, whose breeding range is almost entirely within the boundaries of the United States, is the species that has been all but exterminated. This fine bird will soon be known only from books. Protecting the wild ducks by law causes them to increase rapidly. In the San Luis valley, Colorado, protection to ducks within an enclosure about a pond has caused the birds to resort to the pond in increasing numbers each winter. At Palm Beach, Fla., where no hunting is allowed within a mile of the town, ducks have become so tame that they will come within a few feet of food, while outside the mile limit the same birds are so wild that it is difficult to approach them within gunshot. Species that have been driven away by persecution will return and occupy their old breeding grounds if protected, and local protection by the state or

county is sufficient to insure a great increase in the number of birds. The different kinds of wild duck that winter within this state are the mallard, the green and the blue-winged teal, the cinnamon teal, the shoveler, the pintail, the canvas back. We still have also the Canada goose and the whistling swan besides other species which are more rare.

### THE NATIVE SPARROWS.

Sparrows are noted as seed eaters, but the native species do not confine themselves to a vegetable diet. The song sparrow, the chipping sparrow and the field sparrow consume so many weevils, leaf beetles, young grasshoppers, wasps, and bugs, that fully one-third of their total food consists of such insects.

Their vegetable food is limited almost exclusively to hard seeds. This might seem to indicate that the birds feed to some extent upon grains, but the stomachs show only one kind—oats—and but little of that. The great bulk of the food is made up of grass and weed seed, which form almost the entire diet during winter. The amount of this consumed is immense.

In the Upper Mississippi valley wherever they can obtain a foothold, masses of rank weeds spring up and often form impenetrable thickets which afford food and shelter for immense numbers of birds and enable them to withstand great cold and the most terrible blizzards. A person visiting one of these weed patches on a sunny morning in January, when the thermometer is 30 degrees or more below zero, will see the busy little inhabitants, flitting from branch to branch, twittering and chattering.



THE BLUE TEAL.

Drawn from nature for this article by a normal student of the state university.

tering, and showing every evidence of enjoyment and perfect comfort.

The snowbird and tree sparrow are perhaps the most numerous of all the sparrows.

Examination of many stomachs shows that in the winter the tree sparrow feeds entirely upon seeds of weeds. Probably each bird consumes about one-fourth of an ounce a day. In an article contributed in 1881 to the New York Tribune a writer estimated the amount of weed seed annually destroyed by these birds in Iowa. Upon the basis of one-fourth of an ounce of seed eaten daily by each bird, and supposing that the birds there average ten to each square mile, and that they remain in their winter range 200 days,

we shall have a total of 1,750,000 pounds, or 875 tons, of weed seed consumed in a single season, by this one species. There are some 40 species of native sparrows.

### THE SNOW BIRD.

The migrations of this small and well known species extend from the arctic circle to the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. These birds begin to arrive in the late fall, but they formerly came in vast flocks with the first heavy snowstorm. The snowbird hawk shown in the same cut, preys upon these birds. If the hawk had not been killed off by the farmers, they would perhaps have been playing an important part now in helping us in the battle against the English sparrow.

### THE CHICKADEE.

These birds that come to us only in winter are as useful as the summer birds. They eat eggs and larvae of harmful insects that are in crevices of the bark and in the cracks of the wood. It has been estimated that the chickadee, which is one of our regular winter visitors, eats in a single day 5,000 eggs of the canker worm. The chickadee is a very friendly and tame bird. It fairly overflows with good spirits and seems to be contented and happy, even in the midst of a snowstorm.

### THE SNOW BUNTING.

The snowbunting is a little bird slightly larger than the sparrow, with white breast and mottled brown and white spots on its head and back. It is a cheerful visitor, and when the bitterness of cold drives every other bird to shelter, it seems to thoroughly enjoy itself, hopping about in the drifting snow, catching the seeds that are blown by the wind from the stalks in the fields. Snow buntings always come in flocks and they might well be called the little animated spirits of the snowstorm. They seem almost to ride on the breath of winter and to have their life in it. It is said that they often pass the night beneath the snow. Travelers in the far north have mentioned that this little bird in its northern home has a beautiful song, but in this country we only hear it utter a soft little twitter.

### THE SHORE LARK.

The most beautiful and interesting of the snow birds, however, is the Shore lark, or horned lark, which still abounds in great numbers near the lake in winter. A few weeks ago, the writer saw many of them near the railroad in Tooele county. They are not very wild and can be studied in the open air, their habits being very entertaining. It is a pretty bird, with white breast and pinkish-brown wings and back. It has two little tufts of feathers that grow up on each side of its head, like small horns, but these horns are scarcely perceptible when the bird is dead. It is essentially a ground bird, and when disturbed, it prefers to squat on the earth rather than expose itself by flight. Sometimes it will run swiftly over the frozen ground to escape, and if hard pressed it will then resort to short flights. In the early spring it leaves us for the far-away north.

The shore lark is seven inches long and its wings spread 12 inches. Its



BIRDS ONCE COMMON HERE.

1. American Sparrow Hawk. 2. Field Sparrow. 3. Tree Sparrow. 4. Song Sparrow. 5. Chipping Sparrow. 6. Snow Bird. Most of these birds are rarely seen now, in this locality, owing, probably, to the depredations on their nests by the English sparrow.

breast is ornamented with a broad fan shaped patch of black, and marked with minute curves of yellow points; shoulders light drab, lower wing coverts bright cinnamon; back and wings drab-colored, tinged with reddish. The black, yellow, slate, blue and red colors of this bird make it out most beautiful winter visitor. It feeds largely on insects and weed seeds, and should be protected by the law.

### THE BLACK-HEADED GROSBREAK.

The black-headed grosbeak is found over the whole Pacific coast and Rocky Mountain region, and takes the place filled by the rose-breasted grosbeak in the eastern part of the United States.

When the Colorado potato beetle first swept over the land, and naturalists and farmers were anxious to discover whether or not there were any enemies which would prey upon the pest, the grosbeak was almost the only bird seen to eat the beetles. Further observation confirmed the fact and there can be no reasonable doubt that where the bird is abundant it has contributed very much to the abatement of the pest which has been noted during the last decade. But this is not the only good which the bird does, for many other noxious insects besides the potato beetle are eaten.

The vegetable food of the grosbeak consists of buds and blossoms of forest trees, and seeds, but the only damage of which it has been accused is the stealing of green peas. Mr. Beal observed it eating peas and examined the stomachs of several that were killed in the very act. The stomachs contained a few peas and enough potato beetles old and young, as well as other harmful insects, to pay for all the peas the birds would be likely to eat in a whole

season. The garden where this took place adjoined a small potato field which earlier in the season was so badly infested with the beetles that the vines were completely rotted. The grosbeaks visited the field every day, and finally brought their fledged young. The young birds stood in a row on the topmost rail of the fence and were fed with the beetles which their parents gathered. When a careful inspection was made a few days later, not a beetle, old or young, could be found; the birds had swept them from the field and saved the potatoes.

The grosbeak eats also caterpillars, the pupa of the codling moth, beetles, mostly harmful species, whose larvae are largely borers in trees and plants, and "vine-worms," which live in the ground and feed upon the roots and stalks of plants. Grosbeaks are still found in our canyons and ought to be protected by inflicting heavy legal penalties for killing them.

### THE SHRIKE, OR BUTCHER BIRD.

This courageous and energetic creature is most frequently seen in the winter months, retiring northward to rear its young. It frequents only the deep forests, however, and is not seen along with the shore lark, which lives on the open prairies. The shrike sticks his prey—grasshoppers, mice, etc., on thorns and bushes, and his favorite ruse to the opinion that he did this as a bait to lure other birds; but this seems to be an error. The shrike kills young sparrows and impales them in a similar manner, but his favorite food, insects, are lacking. The bird's feet are less powerful than the rest of his body, hence he prefers to impale his prey rather than to rend it with his claws.

### THE KINGBIRD.

Very similar to the shrike as to courage and habits, is the kingbird. It dislikes and will fight hawks and crows, and is therefore a valuable neighbor to the poultry-keeper. It feeds mainly on insects (90 per cent), the remainder of its food being wild fruits of no value. Some have thought it a great enemy of bees, but it takes very few of these and confines itself almost exclusively to the drones.

In an examination of 62 stomachs of this bird, great care was taken to identify every insect or fragment that had any resemblance to a honeybee; as a result, 30 honeybees (Apis mellifera) were identified, of which 29 were males or drones and one was a worker. These were contained in four stomachs, and were the sole contents of three; in the fourth they constituted 99 per cent of the food. It is evident that the bee-eating habit is only occasional and accidental, rather than habitual; and it is also evident that if this ratio of drones to workers were maintained, the bird would be of more benefit than harm to the apiary.

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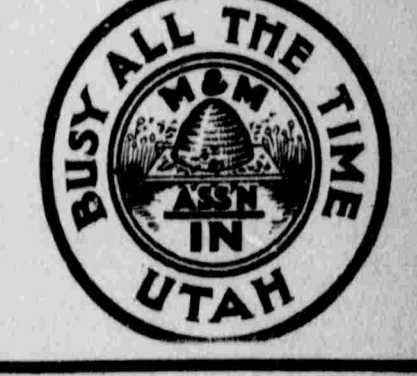
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