

# Blackbirds

(Continued from Page C30)

population passes through Delaware then.

Two years ago the count set a record for the lower Delaware Valley — 300 million birds on a single day during the spring migration.

Last year the peak occurred around the first of December.

The summertime population of blackbirds is hard to estimate because they're so dispersed. But compared to the winter, the number is quite low — somewhere around five million.

As a scientist who's devoted a lifetime to trying to bridge the gap between agriculture and biology — the needs of the farmer and the realities of nature — Linehan looks at the blackbird in two ways.

First, there's the damage done to crops and the economic loss this brings.

"I feel the problem is very

real. Some growers have been terribly hurt," he says.

At the same time, he's aware of another dimension to the problem — the impact on all of us of the presence of such a highly mobile vertebrate population.

"We've already lost this in the buffalo, the passenger pigeon, and many of the species in Africa," he says.

"And I'm convinced that those of us now living will be the last to witness this phenomenon — whether or not we do anything deliberately to destroy or control it. What we're doing now by way of control of the blackbird is only speeding up an inevitable process."

Twenty-five years ago farmers on both sides of the Delaware River were all in favor of an all-out war against the blackbird as a crop pest. Some still see extermination as the only solution. But aside from the ethics involved in deliberately wiping out an entire vertebrate population, there's the question of the feasibility of doing so.

When he first came to Delaware in the mid 1950's, Linehan's efforts were aimed primarily at control of the corn-feeding redwing blackbirds, grackles and cowbirds causing farmers so much grief. His observations since then have led him to consider massive control both a costly and futile effort.

Instead, he has come to believe that damage-avoidance methods such as those described earlier are much more likely to be successful in producing a harvestable corn crop where bird predation is a problem.

He feels research into bird behavior, as well as research on the crop grown — especially plant breeding for resistance — will allow us to produce corn in spite of the blackbird.

To him, the ideal solution is to use modified cultural practices and plant breeding, together with selective controls, in order to produce a crop without having to resort to massive control efforts against this crop pest.

# Expanded protein testing approved for wheat

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A U.S. Department of Agriculture official said today that USDA will adopt a rule May 1 which will extend permissive official testing for protein to all classes of wheat except for mixed and unclassified.

Leland F. Bartelt, administrator of USDA's Federal Grain Inspection Service, said all official agencies, unless exempted, will be required to provide official testing for protein upon request.

Only official agencies designated to provide services at interior locations are eligible to apply for an exemption. To a large degree, such exemptions will be based on the volume of wheat inspected by an agency.

Requests for exemptions must be submitted to FGIS in writing by April 10.

"Official protein testing will be provided strictly on a request basis under the U.S. Grain Standards Act," Bartelt said. "Wheat buyers and sellers, both in interstate and foreign commerce, are entirely free to choose whether or not to use official protein testing services."

FGIS has been providing official protein testing services upon request for hard red winter and hard red spring wheats at export elevators since May 1978.

"We expect requests for the service to increase when testing is available at all specified service points, and is extended to soft red winter, durum and white wheats," Bartelt said.

For domestic lots of wheat, including inbound lots at export port locations, official agencies will be authorized to use any FGIS-

approved protein testing method. For export lots of wheat shipped from export port locations, only an FGIS-approved near-infrared reflectance machine may be used.

Bartelt said the near-infrared reflectance machine is the only method currently available that is capable of providing the rapid and accurate results needed.

"Since loading at export port locations is conducted on a sublot basis, prompt testing results are extremely critical," Bartelt said.

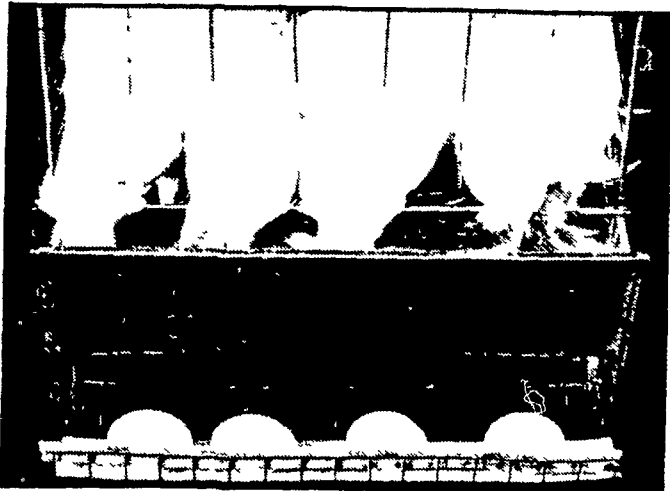
Marketing wheat on the basis of protein content has become increasingly important since protein content has been proven to be a reliable indicator of wheat quality for milling purposes, Bartelt said.

Notice of the expansion of the protein testing service was published in the April 1 Federal Register.

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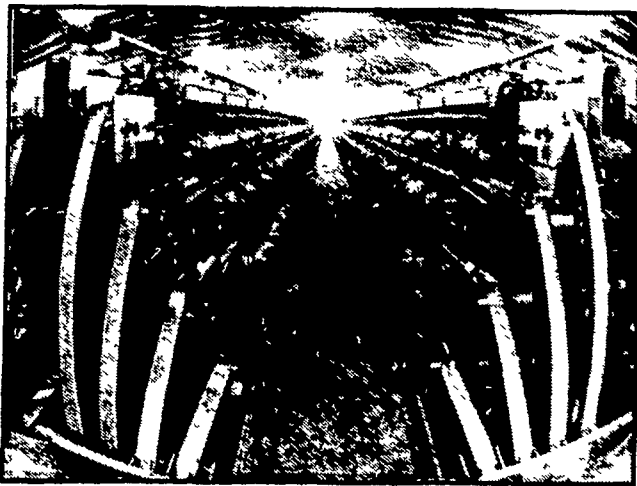
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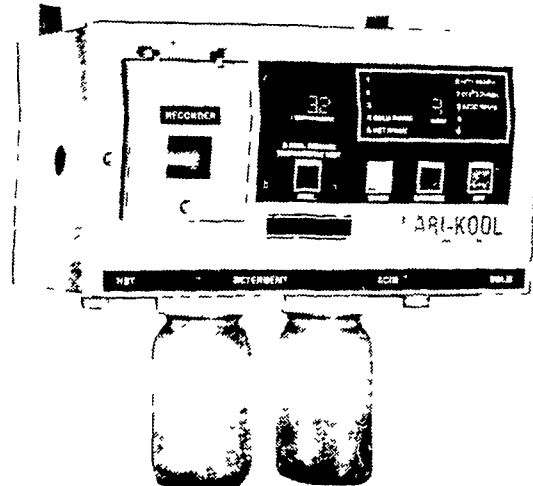
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