

Fin, Fur and Feather

By William J. Robbins Jr.



Aside from their beauty and joyful songs, birds play an important role in our economic life. An exact estimate of their value cannot be given, but it is a certainty that their help in reducing insect life is of a gigantic nature. There are three quarters of a million known species of insects in the world. This is an appalling number but not so alarming as another aspect. The rapidity of reproduction of certain species is alarming when we learn how much valuable plant life one single insect can destroy.

Certain caterpillars consume twice their weight in leaves each day. Add to this revelation the startling fact that a female can cast 60,000,000 of its kind in a single season, and there is no doubt that agencies of control must be continually on the alert.

The curculio and codling moth reportedly cost orchardists \$12,000,000 a year in reduced value of their crops, and in addition to this figure another \$8,000,000 for sprays. Wheat crop loss by the chinchbug is reported to be \$20,000,000 annually, and the same amount of loss confronts the cotton farmer in the south from the ravaging boll weevil.

Potato bugs multiply by casting off 50,000,000 or 60,000,000 chewing offspring in a single season, and the green leaf louse, with a much larger appetite, is capable of multiplying at a much greater rate.

Man is constantly on the alert to curb this ever-present menace. Scientists in conjunction with our Government agencies are continually seeking methods of a swifter defense that would be futile if they were not for the bird life of our fields and forests.

The United States Department of Agriculture recently estimated the value of birds at the tremendous figure of \$200,000,000 annually, or slightly over thirteen cents an acre, in the humid region of our Nation. In the arid region at about \$150,000,000 or twenty-two cents per acre. The grand total of \$350,000,000 is only about one-fourth of a recent estimate (\$1,590,040,500) of the total cost of damage caused by insects. The value of birds in Pennsylvania in keeping down noxious insects and

weed seeds amounts to over \$7,000,000 annually.

Birds are very active and this, it has been learned, is the reason for their voraciousness. In their food habits they are so diversified that nearly all species of insects can be found on the menu as a contribution to their ravenous appetites. There are forty-three birds that consume the army worm. One hundred and ten, the pill-bugs; browntail moth, thirty-one; chestnut weevils, eighty-five; chinchbug, twenty-nine; clover root borers, ninety-four; clover weevil, forty-eight; codling moth, thirty-six; cutworms, ninety-eight; forest tent caterpillar, thirty-two; gypsy moth, forty-six; horseflies, forty-nine; leaf hopper, one hundred seventy-five; orchard tent caterpillar, forty-three; potato beetle, forty-two; white grubs, ninety-five; and wireworms, two hundred and five. These figures represent only a partial list but will tend to give one an insight into the tremendous part birds play in destroying insect pests.

Oscar Hawksley, a young, but nationally known ornithologist and graduate of Principia College at Elsau, Illinois was a guest at our home a few years back. His knowledge of bird life was great and varied but his interests were primarily in the esthetic, recreational and educational value of birds. One expedition he made for the National Geographic magazine was to the arctic regions to photograph birdlife above the arctic circle. Upon completion of the two years' expedition, his records, both photographic and written, were so complete that many suppositions of birdlife in the frigid zone were changed and in some instances radical changes were made by older and more experienced people in this field.

Another trip by this young naturalist was to India where he was to study the methods of falconry in order to make comparisons of this sport with reports on file from other parts of the world. While in India he had an opportunity to meet a Shah or ruler of a Province whose twin sons were very much interested in falconry. Because of their mutual interests they became very close

friends and consequently he was invited to spend his spare time as a royal guest. This, claimed Oscar, was a never-to-be-forgotten experience, for he lived in all the regal splendor of the Country. From our front porch he could distinguish by song the birds that inhabited our little sanctuary and it was he who called my attention to seventeen different birds, many of which would not doubt go unobserved by the untrained. His stay was much too short, but his visit has been classified by myself, and other members of the family as the incentive for my profound interest in birds.

In going through my notes of his visit I came across the following fallacies and facts that might prove interesting to some readers.

Birds are not charmed by snakes so they are unable to fly, thereby making them easy prey.

The Hummingbird can fly both forward and backward. And it is a bird, not a moth. It's true that the Crested Flycatcher uses a snake skin or two in addition to vegetable fibers, roots and other materials to make its nest.

The Northern Shrike impales on thorns or barbed wire the insects, mice, or small birds that it captures.

The Whip-poor-will sits lengthwise on a limb, not crosswise. Crows, Blackbirds, Starlings and Cowbirds are walking birds, not hoppers.

The Blue-Jay and Starling are excellent mimics. The Raven is not extinct in Pennsylvania, but it is just holding its own.

The male Goldfinch changes its black and yellow plumage of summer to a mixed brown in winter. Cowbirds do not build nests, but lay their eggs in the nests of other birds.

Cedar Waxwings are the only common North American birds that have a tail tipped with yellow.

The Catbird and Brown Thrasher are often called mockers for they can render a fairly close imitation of other birds' songs.

Wrens, including the Short-billed and Long-billed Marsh Wrens, build several "dummy" nests. The Nuthatch is the only bird that can perch and hop upside down on a tree trunk.

Small birds don't use the back of geese as transports during migration. Eagles do not carry away small children or babies. The cry of a Rain Crow (Cuckoo) is no indication of a storm.

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THE DALLAS POST

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ONLY YESTERDAY

From The Post of ten and twenty years ago this week.

From The Issue Of January 16, 1942

First National Bank, closing one of its most successful years, re-elects all officers and directors. C. A. Frantz is president, Sterling Macchell vice president.

F. B. Schooley is named a director of Rural Building And Loan.

Fred M. Kiefer attends annual Explorer's Club dinner at the Plaza Hotel in New York, meeting Lowell Thomas and Vladimir Steffanson.

Pupils return to Lehman schools as measles starts to wane. At the peak of the epidemic, thirty seven children were absent.

Mr. and Mrs. S. N. Goss, Claude Street, hear that their daughter Ida's husband, James Mason, was shot down on New Years Eve by a Japanese plane, and that he is being invalided home. A cigarette lighter touched to a piece of rag attracted the attention of the rescuing plane over the Pacific.

Plans are being laid for formation of an auxiliary police association to serve during the national emergency.

Skating is good at Harveys Lake, with lake completely frozen and free of snow.

Cabbage, 3 cents per pound; sweet potatoes, 5 cents per pound; table syrup, 2½¢ can, 10 cents; rolled oats, 20 oz. package, 7 cents; tomato soup, 3 cans for 20 cents.

Rev. Russel J. May, for four years pastor at Shavertown Methodist Church, will enter YMCA work at Fort Slocum, N. Y.

Announcement has been made of the marriage of Alma Emma Crispell, Noxen, to Ernest S. Brown, Vernon, December 24.

First Aid classes will start next week at Dallas Borough High School, with a registration of 175.

Knitters are busy in the Back Mountain, turning out socks and sweaters.

Mrs. Elizabeth Erb, Trucksville's oldest resident, celebrates her ninety-second birthday by knitting socks for the Red Cross.

Have Baby Boy

Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Smith, Pioneer Avenue, have announced the birth of a baby boy at General Hospital, January 10. Mrs. Smith is the former Eleanor Landells of Springfield, Mass. Mr. Smith is son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Crawford Smith of Wyoming Avenue. They have a daughter, Susan Jane.

SAFETY VALVE

PALMS TO THE RED CROSS

Goodleigh Farm
January 14, 1952

Dear Editor,

So many times I have heard people displeased with the Red Cross.

Here is an experience which may be a consolation to many families whose boys are away from home.

We received news a few days ago that Mrs. Walter Weir was to undergo an operation. Her son, Walter Weir, Jr., is at Camp Pendleton, California, with the Marines.

At 6 P. M. on Wednesday I telephoned Arch Brooks to ask him whom to call at the Red Cross to see if young Walter could come home. He gave me the Red Cross telephone number and referred me to Clair Borland.

Mr. Borland responded immediately. I gave him the information and the address only once. With pencil and paper he took down the doctor's name, address, and telephone number to verify the statements.

Before 7 P. M. I learned from the Red Cross that contact had been made with the California Red Cross, and that Walter would be advised to report to his commanding officer, who in turn would contact the Red Cross Field Director.

"But", I said, "he hasn't enough money to fly home". I was then assured that the Red Cross would advance the money.

I immediately put in a long distance call to Camp Pendleton, and in fifteen minutes our local operator reported that they would have Walter on the telephone in ten minutes.

In ten minutes Walter was on the line. I told him to go to his commanding officer, tell him the news, and that everything would be arranged for him by the Red Cross.

Later in the evening Arch Brooks called to find out if there would be anything he could do and to ask if the Red Cross had reported. We assured him of the complete cooperation we had received.

The next day at 3 P. M. Red Cross headquarters called to say that Walter had left by plane at 6:40 A. M. California time, and would be in La Guardia Field at 11 P. M.

I feel that this performance warrants shouting from the housetops, as so many people are quick to criticize.

This has been my experience, and I shall always be grateful to the Red Cross.

Quote me if you wish.

Mary Weir.

Editor's note: Quote you? We printed the whole thing. With the annual Red Cross drive coming up, the information couldn't have come at a better time.

FROM PHYLLIS SMITH

January 10, 1952

Happy New Year Myra & Howard,

Thank you so much for the kind publicity. Little did we ever think we would become two foot-prints on the sands of time in the Back Mountain Area.

I am in Providence now with Ida Lee. She had to give up teaching and is in bed most of the time these winter days. The flesh may be weak but the spirit is still undaunted and we are having more fun than you could think possible. Ida Lee's head hasn't dulled any and her daughter has to go some to keep well enough informed to converse intelligently with her. Mother says she can die happy if J. Howard McGrath is exposed for what he really is. We are reading some old Dickens favorites and right now are chuckling over the Pickwick Papers. What a humorous writer Dickens was and his understanding of human nature simply superb. We are also giving Shaw a whirl but the system can only stand so much Shaw at one time I think.

Howard will be interested to know that I edited the Christmas issue of the "Splash" which is to the Ranch what "The Crimson" is to Harvard. It was a fat and somewhat grotesque issue, but the Sarkas claim, the best to date. It was fun and you would be amazed at the good writing done

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Barnyard Notes

Myra and I are indebted to Joe and Charlotte MacVeigh for a beautiful book.

It was Tuesday morning, one of the dreariest days of the year, when Joe dropped in grinning and handed Myra, "Stalking Birds With Color Camera."

Written by Arthur A. Allen, professor of Ornithology at Cornell University, it contains 331 color illustrations, 264 made by Dr. Allen, whose contributions on birds to the National Geographic Magazine have covered a span of seventeen years.

I have never seen any book on birds to compare with it—not even Audubon's beautiful paintings.

In the course of making the photographs, Dr. Allen covered large areas of the United States, Canada, Alaska and Mexico. The narrative accompanying the photographs tells of his intimate association with birds over a span of fifty-one years—an association that often called for observation of birds' activities hours at a time from a blind only an arm's length from the nest.

Most of the plates and much of the material first appeared in the National Geographic Magazine which assumed the cost of the color engravings over a period of years.

In his introduction to "Stalking Birds with Color Camera", Gilbert Grosvenor, president of the National Geographic Society, says: "Preparation of the 331 color engravings and the 93 in monochrome exclusively for the limited edition of this book would have been so expensive as to make the price of a volume prohibitive. Nevertheless seventy-two color plates, never before published, have been included. The Society is happy and proud to make available to bird lovers in a single volume at a nominal price this magnificent collection of Dr. Allen's natural color photographs and his fascinating narrative of his studies and experiences."

If you are one who delights in the pleasure of observing feathered neighbors and who would like to share that experience with others by all means beg, borrow or steal \$7.50 and send it to the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C. for a copy.

Interestingly enough some of the most delightful pictures were taken by Dr. Allen in the vicinity of his home at Ithaca.

Among those that stand out are a robin approaching her nest to feed her young; a bluebird poised on a pink Hilloch; a Cedar Waxwing balanced on a vineberry branch feeding four pink mouthed youngsters; an Indigo Bunting feeding its foster child, a cowbird, nestled in a wild rose.

But it is unfair to select any above others; some of the most appealing are those of sparrows, black-capped chickadees, nuthatches, wrens, blue jays and orioles.

The book's 328 pages are filled to overflowing with large sections devoted to game birds, waterfowl, humming birds and owls. But get it. Any words of mine are poor to describe such a fund of knowledge and of beauty.

Again we want to thank Joe and Charlotte for a book that will mean hours of pleasure and enjoyment over a period of many years.

I missed the story last week, when I told of Emily Besecker's experience with the owl that fell stunned outside her window.

When she picked it up, she thought it was dead. Taking it in the house she forced a couple of drops of whiskey down its throat with a medicine dropper and could feel its heart begin to beat. She took it out on the porch railing but it sat there dazed until she gave it several more drops. Its claws gripped her finger until they drew blood, and its heart beat rapidly. Again she placed it on the railing and that time, fully recovered and full of life, it flew away.

Last year she had a similar experience with a flicker that flew against her picture window with such a thud that he dropped to the ground, dead—or so she and Jim thought. She took him in the house and administered a few drops of aromatic spirits of ammonia. The bird failed to respond, and Jim, convinced he was dead, said "that one will never come through." After he left the house, Emily gave the flicker a few more drops. He perked up. She set him on the porch railing and shortly he soared away.

Those who have had canaries, frequently subject to heart attacks and fainting spells, are familiar with this treatment to which many apparently "dead" birds respond.

Shavertown Board Gives 1951 Reports

Shavertown Methodist Church Official Board met in the Sunday School room Tuesday night and gave reports for 1951, all of which showed a definite increase over previous years. Dr. Closterman was appointed to the finance committee and Mr. Haycox to the pastoral relations committee.

Present were: Mrs. Stephen Johnson, Mrs. James Martin, Mrs. J. H. Godtfriing, Mrs. Gordon Edwards, Mrs. Floyd Sisco, Mrs. Martin Porter, Percy Hart, Howard Yeager, Lewis Underwood, Ted Poad, George Jacobs, John Henninger, A. G. Eddinger, Thomas Morgan, Frank Morrison, Herbert Tippet, John Coon, Thomas Graham, Willard Durbin, Leroy Durham, Fred Howell and I. L. Brace.

Entertain Friends

Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Lavelle, Shaver Avenue, Shavertown, entertained a number of friends Saturday night. They were Mr. and Mrs. Myron Williams of Harveys Lake, Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Garrie of Fernbrook and Mr. and Mrs. Byron Ide of Trucksville.

Bill Jones walked round and round



Bill Jones walked 'round and 'round. He lived from one pay day to another. He was in a squirrel's cage. He could not get ahead financially until...

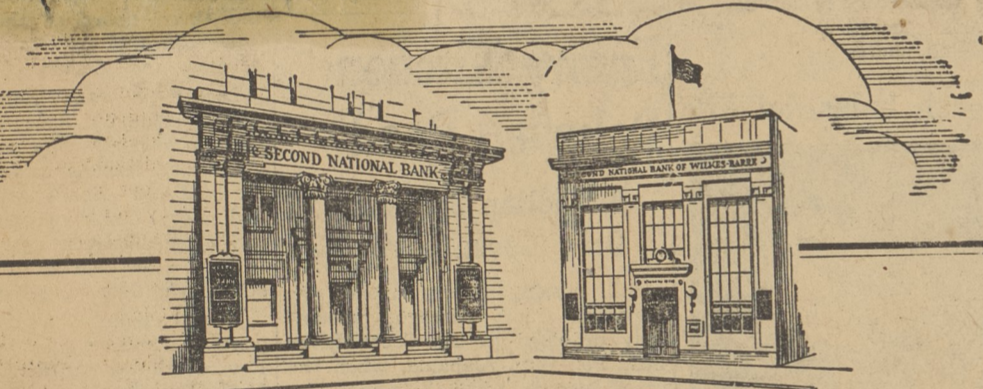
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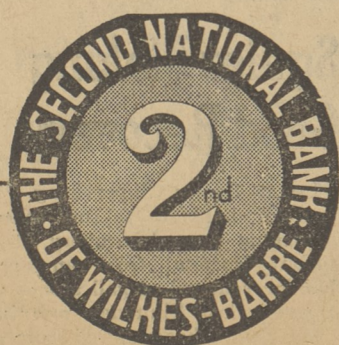
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