

The Meadow Lark

The people whose homes are among the green fields need no one to tell them of the aesthetic value of the meadowlark. It is claimed that the song of the prairie bird far exceeds in volume and sweetness that of its eastern brother of the meadows, but the wild sweet song of either leaves an impress on the mind of the hearer that can never be effaced. However, the beauty of the meadowlark's plumage and the sweetness of its song are far less important to the human race than its value as an insect destroyer.

It is probable that there are few birds as valuable to the farmer as the meadowlark, as it is entirely terrestrial in its habits, procuring almost its entire food supply from insect life harmful to meadows and prairie lands.

The Meadowlark—Adult both sexes; general appearance of back and wing coverts mixed black and brownish, each feather being streaked or barred; top of head with median line of buff; outer tail-feathers largely white, inner ones barred; line from bill over eye yellow, bordered above and below by black; sides of throat whitish, middle throat, breast and upper belly bright yellow; large black crescent on breast; sides and lower belly white streaked with black; legs strong, toes long. General aspect of head very flat from crown to end of bill. Length of males from end of bill to tip of tail 9.50 to 11 inches; females 8 to 10 inches.

Western Meadowlark—Differs from the eastern form by being larger and lighter colored, almost grayish when looked at from above; the yellow of the throat extends to the cheeks, which are grayish white in magna.

Texas Meadowlark—In size and general appearance like the western but the cheeks are whitish as in the eastern; the yellow of under parts being somewhat deeper.

The meadowlark is found in Minnesota, Iowa, western Kansas and Indian Territory and northern and eastern Texas and all of the country east of this line of states, also in the southern portions of Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. It breeds in all parts of this immense district. In the winter months it is not generally found north of a diagonal line commencing on the Atlantic coast at about 42 degrees north and running southeasterly to 38 degrees north in Kansas.

The western meadowlark is found in North and South Dakota, Nebraska, western Kansas and Indian Territory, and northwestern Texas and all of the territory west to the Pacific, also in southern British Columbia and Alberta, southwestern Saskatchewan and western Manitoba. It also overlaps the territory of the eastern meadowlark by a very irregular distribution in Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois and southern Michigan.

The Texas meadowlark is found from southern and western Texas through southern New Mexico and Arizona.

The nest is placed beside a tuft of grass or at the foot of a weed stalk in a natural depression, or one made by the birds in a meadow or prairie; it is built of coarse grasses or weed stalks lined with finer material of the same kind and is usually well hidden by a dome or roof.

The eggs are white, spotted and speckled with brown, purple and lavender. Usual number five, varying from three to seven.

An analysis of the food of the meadowlark leads one to wonder how a farmer can act so much against his own interests as to allow one of these

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birds to be shot on premises which he controls.

It is known that nearly three-quarters of the meadowlark's food for the year is composed of insects, over 2 per cent is weed seeds, and 15 per cent is grain. However, an examination of the food by months shows that all of the grain that is eaten is gleaned from the stubblefield in the months of January, February, March, April and December. After the month of May, when grain is ripening and is being harvested, none is eaten by meadowlarks. The favorite food is insects, when they can be obtained; for six months of the year the amount being over 90 per cent and during August and September over 99 per cent. Even during the winter months, when insect life is dormant, the meadowlark finds enough that is hidden below the surface of the ground or secreted among the grass to furnish a very considerable portion of its diet. An examination of the table showing the actual kind of food found in the 238 stomachs gives further proof of the immense economic value of the meadowlark. Grasshoppers and crickets compose over 25 per cent of its food, while an equally large share is made up of beetles, among them weevils, curculio and click-beetles, these latter during the larval stage being known as wireworms, when they often destroy seed before it has germinated, thus ruining fields of corn and other grain at the outset. Meadowlarks also

destroy cutworms, armyworms and numbers of the pest known as the chinch bug. This latter pest has destroyed in the United States during the last half century grain to the value of over \$330,000,000. In some of the southern states, notably Georgia, the meadowlark is called the wheat-bird, as it is claimed it destroys wheat; however, the scientific study of its food proves this to be an unfounded and erroneous claim. Fortunately the meadowlark is protected by law, in all parts of the country except in the following states, viz.: Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, Missouri and Idaho.

The agriculturists of these states should insist that this valuable bird be given absolute protection, for by doing so millions of insect pests will be destroyed daily, and hundreds of thousands of dollars will be saved which would otherwise be lost.—Wm. Dutcher, Chairman American Ornithologists' Union, in Nebraska Farmer.

A Baffling Cry

The democratic party is not disrupted by Tuesday's defeat. It is not disorganized. There is occasion for thanksgiving that it is not "reorganized." It is not republicanized. The country has one political party which is an organized system of spoils and venality, and one is enough. In the next campaign the democratic party will renew the battle for principles. It

will find a candidate big enough to lead. It will adopt a platform that will be a pronouncement of principles rather than a bid for votes. It will strive to deserve to win. It will work for victory—because of the opportunity that victory brings, not for the material perquisites, not for "the loaves and fishes." —Joplin Globe.

One is Enough

The people of the United States do not want two republican parties. And it is evident that they will not accept a democratic party—however honorable its candidates—so long as that party, in appearance at least, is managed by Wall street, by a set of plutocratic influences no less harmful than those which control the republican party.—Chicago American.

There must be a reorganization of the democratic party along radical lines. It must stand for something besides tradition. It must face to the future and cease living in the past. In a word, it must stand firm against monopoly, special privilege, trust extortion and corporate control of government. It must offer real remedies. Mere opposition will avail it nothing. It must be essentially constructive.—Milwaukee Daily News.

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