

THE FARMER'S TEN BEST BIRD FRIENDS.

They are the night hawk, killdeer plover, chimney swift, bluebird, downy woodpecker, phoebe, chickadee, barn swallow, purple martin and chipping sparrow

By Edward B. Clark

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM U. S. BIOLOGICAL SURVEY



DOWNY WOODPECKER'S



KILLDEER



BARN SWALLOW



CHIPPING SPARROW

BLUE BIRD

AN EMINENT American ornithologist recently was asked to name the ten most beneficial birds of the United States. Here is his answer: Nighthawk, killdeer plover, chimney swift, bluebird, downy woodpecker, phoebe, chickadee, barn swallow, purple martin and chipping sparrow.

Having given the names of the ten birds over whose good deeds man should rejoice the ornithologist said, "But the list is longer. There are other birds and many of them, that work as hard or nearly as hard for man as those which I have named. Between 30 and 40 species there is small room for choice, but let the ten stand because the list perhaps cannot be improved upon."

Later the scientist wanted to hedge a little, for he said that there were some birds of prey which at least should have a place side by side with the familiars of orchard and garden to which he had given first rank. The cause of the birds of prey, however, has been pleaded before. The barn owl, the sparrow hawk and some others have been given their credit marks, but it is to be doubted, perhaps, if anything which can be said in behalf of a predatory one which occasionally picks up a chicken will serve to save its life when it is caught in the act of larceny. Not one of the birds in the Table of Ten is a thief. Honest, well-meaning, cheerful, and for the most part neighborly, they go through their lives working, which means eating, in order that man more fully may reap what he has sown.

It is admittedly probable that some close students of the habits of birds may dispute the accuracy of the list as it is given, but it is not likely that anyone who has watched the daily operations of these friends in feathers from night-hawk to chipping sparrow will be able to prove that so much as one black mark should be entered on the daily records of their lives.

By their appetites ye shall know them. A bird is good or bad from the agriculturists' viewpoint according to what and how much it eats. This is a plain tale of the birds' bill of fare. It is lucky, perhaps, for the songsters, as well as for the tuneless ones, that the birds of the best habits of life are well known by sight to all Americans. The trouble that the bird protectors have found lies almost wholly in the fact that the habits of birds are not as well known as the birds themselves.

It was Dr. A. K. Fisher of the Biological Survey who named the ten most useful birds. He is in charge of "economic investigations" in the Bureau of the Biological Survey of the Department of Agriculture. In the bureau are kept the bird records. The papers in the pigeon holes in part read like the catalogues of a seed store and the collection lists of an entomologist. One can say of the birds that seeds and insects "form the chief of their diet."

To go to the mammals for a figure of speech it has taken years of closest work and field work to separate the sheep from the goats. In the bird world there are many more sheep than there are goats, but the job of separation has been hard. In the little flock of best friends of the farmer there are only two birds which, perhaps, are not well known to all suburban dwellers. The two are the killdeer plover and the yellow-billed cuckoo. The nighthawk, which heads the list, is, or ought to be, known to everybody. Of course it is not a hawk at all, and the name by which it is known in the Northern states, has hurt it. Paraphrasing it might be said, "Give a bird a bad name and it will shoot it." In the Southern states the nighthawk is known as the bull-bat. In the fall and winter it is killed ruthlessly and to no purpose except that of so-called sport, for it is useless, or virtually useless as food.

Nighthawks are wholly insectivorous. They do no damage to crops. F. E. L. Beal, who has made field studies for the Biological Survey of the dietary of virtually all the commoner birds, says of the food of the nighthawk, "True bugs, moths, flies, grasshoppers and crickets are important elements of its food. Several species of mosquitoes, including the transmitter of malaria, are eaten. Other well-known pests consumed by the nighthawk are Colorado potato beetles, cucumber beetles, rice, clover-leaf and cotton-boll weevils, hill bugs, bark beetles, squash bugs and moths of the cotton worm."

structive pest, has been proved to be a favorite food for the killdeer.

The chimney swift, almost always called the chimney swallow, although it is not a swallow at all, is sometimes looked upon as a nuisance because in the summer time it is apt to make more or less of a racket in the chimneys leading from bedrooms in which tired folk are trying to sleep. This swift-winged bird never lights upon the ground, a tree or a building. Its only resting place is on sooty bricks in the dark interior of a chimney or on the inner wood of some hollow tree in a wilderness that knows no chimney. All of the swift's food is captured on the wing. It eats thousands of mosquitoes, gnats and other noxious winged insects. It hunts from daylight to dark, and all its hunting is in the interest of man. The swift gathers its nesting material while on the wing. It has a curious habit, while in flight, of nipping off the tips of dead twigs, and so quickly and neatly is the thing done that the eye barely can follow the operation.

The bluebird, with its "violet of song," is loved wherever it is known. Luckily bluebirds are prolific creatures, for about twenty years ago a severely cold winter made such inroads on the tribe that it was feared the birds might never come back into their own. They came back, and now there are as many as ever and they are continuing a warfare against man's enemies with no pacifist in the land to interpose objection.

The bluebird is given third place in the list of the ten most beneficial birds. Science is cruel in order to be kind. Nearly nine hundred bluebirds met death so that the scientists might prove that they were useful to man. An examination of the stomachs of the martyrs showed that 68 per cent of the food "consists of insects and their allies, while the other 32 per cent is made up of various vegetable substances found mostly in the stomachs of birds taken in winter."

It is a happy thing for the bluebird that the scientists are able to set it down that "so far as its vegetable food is concerned the bird is positively harmless." The bluebird is a beauty. It is neighborly and kindly disposed. Its appealing spring-time note sounds far away, for the bluebird is a ventriloquist. It perches in a tree at the doorstep, but seemingly calls to you from the skies.

The downy woodpecker is the tiniest member of the woodpecker family which spreads itself pretty well over the United States. The downy eats everything in the bug and insect line from tiny ants to big caterpillars. Frequently these little woodpeckers are shot by orchardists because they appear to be injuring the trees. This is what Dr. Glover, an entomologist of the Department of Agriculture, has said concerning this matter of suspicion:

"On one occasion a downy woodpecker was observed making a number of small, rough-edged perforations in the bark of a young shade tree. Upon examining the tree when the bird had flown away, it was found that wherever the bark had been injured the young larvae of the wood-eating beetles had been snugly coiled underneath and had been destroyed by the birds. The hairy woodpecker, a bigger brother of the downy, also is a beneficial bird, but the little one rather outdoes the big one in the work of well-doing.

The phoebe is the true harbinger of spring, even if the robin and the bluebird more frequently are given the honor. The phoebe belongs to the tribe of flycatchers and it takes virtually all of its food on the wing. It cannot come north until spring comes as its companion, because its food does not fly about in cold weather.

I have seen four young phoebes sitting side by side on the limb of a tree while the mother bird for two hours struck down quarry with which to feed them. Not a mistake did she make, and she played no favorites. Out from the limb she would dart, there would be a click of the bill and an insect tidbit would be fed to one of the fledglings. The young were fed one after another, the mother bird apparently remembering which one had been given the last mouthful.

F. E. L. Beal of the Biological Survey says all that is necessary to prove the phoebe's case: "There are but few birds in the United States more endeared to the rural and village population than the common phoebe. Its habit of associating itself with man and his works, its trustful disposition and the fact that it never is seen to prey upon any product of husbandry have rendered it almost sacred."

The chickadee appealed to Ralph Waldo Emerson. The bird has a philosophy of its own and Emerson recognized it. It stays in the north country all winter, for no cold can shackle its activities nor chill its cheer. Emerson met the chickadee on a blustery winter day and wrote:

Here was this atom in full breath
Hurling defiance at vast death;
This scrap of valor just for play
Frosts the north wind in waistcoat gray.

A favorite food of the chickadee consists of the eggs of the two species of tent caterpillar moths which are among the most destructive of insects. In winter it eats larvae, chrysalids and eggs of moths, varied by a few seeds. The bird's bill of fare is made up for the main part of insects, nearly all of which are known to the farmer or fruit raiser as pests.

The barn swallow and the purple grackle, cousin swallows, are familiar to all dwellers in the country. There are five other common species of swallows found within the United States and all of them are of beneficent life. Swallows take all of their food, or nearly all of it, while on the wing. Virtually all of the insects which they destroy are either injurious or annoying, and the government scientists say that the numbers of the pests "destroyed by swallows are not only beyond calculation, but almost beyond imagination."

Wordsworth might have asked the American cuckoo, as he did its European cousin, whether he should call it a bird or but a wandering voice. There are two fairly abundant species of cuckoos in America, the yellow-billed and the black-billed. Their habits are much alike. These two birds are ventriloquists. One hears their voices where they are not. The cuckoos thread their way through the tangles of branches, gliding after the manner of ghosts. The bird eats what most other birds disdain. It has a special fondness for the great hairy destructive caterpillars, and when it finds a nest of the tent caterpillars it will not move on until the destruction of the pests and their home is complete. The cuckoo frequently is called the rain crow. It has no place as a weather prophet, however, for it is apt to be especially vociferous in the driest times.

In the list of the ten best birds there is only one bird of the dooryard. These little birds nest in the currant bushes, in the vines which clamber over the porch or in the hedges which bound the dooryard domain. Sparrows are known as seed eaters, and this might carry an implication that they are destroyers of grain. Some of them are, but we have the scientists as witnesses that the food habits of the chipping sparrow, the bird which comes to your doorstep for crumbs, are all good. It has been written of it that it is "well worthy of the welcome and protection which it everywhere receives."

It must not be thought because ten birds have been named as the best friends of the farmer that there are not scores of others whose daily work is for the good of man. The ten excel, but the others strive with them throughout their short lives to work as well as in them lies for the good of man who too often, misunderstanding their intentions, becomes their persecutor.

SAFE FROM BARBED WIRE.

One of the most trying tasks incident to trench fighting has been considerably lightened by the appearance in the British trenches of gloves made of a fabric which is said to be impervious to barbed wire points, says Popular Science Monthly. The fabric is made up into mittens, with the first finger and thumb separate. The fabric is waterproof, and in addition the gloves are insulated for gripping electrically charged wires.

The same material is applied to the manufacture of sleeping bags, which, when opened, may be thrown over a barbed wire entanglement to allow a soldier to climb over the sharp points without injury. When made up into vests or tunics the fabric is strong enough to turn shrapnel splinters or even a bullet when it has lost part of its momentum. The interlining is antisepticized, so that if a bullet goes through it takes into the wound enough antiseptic wool to prevent poisoning.

The materials used in the manufacture of this remarkable fabric have been sedulously kept secret this far.

CONDENSED NEWS OF INTEREST TO ALL.

DATES FOR COMING EVENTS.

- June 5 and 6—Pageant of Lincoln, presenting "The Gate City."
- June 6-7-8—State Undertakers' Convention at Hastings.
- June 5-6—Spanish War Veterans' State Convention at North Platte.
- June 12 to 15—Trans-Mississippi Bakers' Ass'n convention at Omaha.
- June 13-14-15—Annual convention of Nebraska Elks at Omaha.
- June 13 to 16—State P. E. O. Convention at Alliance.
- June 13-14-15—Great Western Handicap Tournament at Omaha.
- June 13 to 15—Nebraska Pharmaceutical Convention at Hastings.
- June 19-20-21-22—American Union of Swedish Singers, West. Div., concerts and convention at Omaha.
- June 20 to 24—State Stockmen's convention at Alliance.
- June 21 to 23—Fraternal Order of Eagles, state meeting at Lincoln.
- June 7—Elkhorn Valley Editorial association meeting at Long Pine.
- June 28-29—International Auctioneers' Association Convention at Omaha.
- July 3-4-5—Mid-Summer Race Meet at Kearney.
- July 5 to 8—State Golf Tournament at Omaha.
- July 10-11-12—Northwestern Hotel Men's Association Convention at Omaha.
- July 10-11-12—Missouri Valley Veterinary association convention at Omaha.
- July 25—Nebraska Democratic convention at Hastings.

J. W. Colbert of Weeping Water has a phenomenal beef-raising record. Just a few days ago he disposed of a bunch of steers on the South Omaha market that showed up with a record of more than 580 pounds average gain in five months, and the gain in price over what he paid for them was \$3.40 per hundred. He asserts he fed them snapped corn for the first two months, then shelled corn and alfalfa, with a little oil meal added the last two months.

The citizens of Chappell are raising \$2,000 to build a home in Lincoln for the Rev. E. J. Hayes, who suffered a brain hemorrhage which has affected his speech. This trouble and his age, nearly 70, make it certain that he can no longer carry the burden or do the work of a pastor.

A special election will be held at Wymore, June 3, for the purpose of voting on a proposition authorizing the board of education to issue \$45,000 bonds of which \$35,000 is for the erection of a new school building, and \$10,000 in repairing and refurbishing the old buildings.

Contract has been let for the erection of a concrete and steel bridge to cross the Platte river south of Kearney, the price being \$44,350. It is to be a state-aid bridge and one-fourth of the cost will be borne by Kearney and Buffalo counties.

July 10, 11 and 12 have been selected as dates for the annual meeting of the Missouri Valley Veterinary association at Omaha, an organization which brings visitors from Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado and South Dakota.

Clarence, ten-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Wesley Dunkin, living near Story, twenty-five miles north of Harrison while wrestling with a brother, ran the point of a pair of scissors in the back of his neck and died from the injury.

The village of Sweetwater, near Ravenna, was visited by a disastrous fire just recently. Three buildings were destroyed and the nine months' old baby of Mr. and Mrs. Jansen was burned to death.

A hail storm swept over a strip two miles wide and five miles long in the northern part of Thayer county recently and reports are that considerable damage was done to fruit and garden crops.

Twenty-two separate organizations in the city of Omaha are being invited by the Commercial club to cooperate in the arrangements for a big patriotic parade and demonstration to be held on Flag day, June 14.

Six hundred building laborers employed on a million dollars' worth of buildings and twenty-five jobs of paving in Lincoln, are on strike.

Master Bakers of Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri and Kansas will join in a monster four-state meeting in Omaha, June 12 to 15. The association will meet under the name of the Trans-Mississippi Master Bakers' association.

It is reported that J. H. Morrison is to remodel his building that has been used for a saloon for years, at Superior, and make an up-to-date moving picture and vaudeville theater of it, giving Superior two moving play houses.

Despite the heroic efforts of her 5-year-old brother to save her, Lucinda Sargent, aged 17, was burned so badly at Falls City that she died. She had tried to start a fire with kerosene.

W. R. Armogast of Rising City has challenged William Kaufman of Columbus for the Combs trap shooting trophy, and the match will be held at Columbus June 11.

The largest paving campaign ever undertaken in Hastings has begun. When completed Hastings will have nearly twelve miles of new paved streets.

TOO GOOD TO THROW AWAY

"Drippings" From Fried Lamb or Mutton May Be Made Into an Excellent "Gravy Stock."

The housekeeper whose rule it is always to make a savory brown or creamed gravy of the drippings and meat-essence remaining in the frying pan after veal, chicken or hamburger steaks have been cooked, will frequently let the contents of the pan be discarded, if it were used for frying mutton or lamb. This is on account of the quality of the fat that cooks out of the meat, which is disagreeable to many persons. But if care has been taken not to permit any scorching during the frying, let a cupful of boiling water be poured into the pan after the meat has been removed, and let this boil up well, stirring with a spoon, until all traces of the meat-essence have been dissolved away from the pan. Strain this liquid into an earthen or agate bowl, dash a little cold water into it, and set aside in a cool place. In a few hours the fat will have formed a solid cake, and can be removed, leaving a cupful of excellent "gravy stock;" this can be used for re-serving any left-overs of the aforesaid mutton or lamb, if wanted as hash or ragout, adding notably to the flavor and richness thereof; or it can be added to one's soup stock.

The same method can be used with the dripping pan in which lamb or mutton has been roasted.—American Cookery.

HOUSEHOLD HINTS

A good furniture polish is eight ounces of sweet oil, four ounces turpentine, two ounces ammonia. Apply with cloth and polish with woolen cloth.

After washing a white knitted jersey, put it on a coat-hanger to dry, and hang it on a line in the air. It will keep a better shape than if pegged on the line.

Ground rice is excellent for cleaning white cloth. It should be applied with a piece of clean white flannel, left for two or three hours, and then well brushed and shaken.

Rusty irons should be heated, rubbed on a piece of beeswax tied in linen, and then with a coarse flannel cloth, sprinkled with household salt. This will give a polish like glass.

Silk stockings should never be ironed. Wash them in soapsuds made with good white soap and lukewarm water and rinse in clear water of the same temperature. Rough dry.

Do not iron lingerie ribbons while damp if you want them to be soft. Wrap while wet smoothly around a big bottle covered with thick muslin, and press with a cool iron when dry.

If the knob has come off the kettle take a cork, put a screw through it, push the screw through the lid of the kettle and screw a burr on the end. You will have a knob that will not come off nor get hot.

Spinach, German Style.

Cook the spinach by steam (in a steamer) or in a very little water, in a closed vessel, over a slow fire until tender; then chop fine. For every pint of spinach mince one-half cupful fat pork, and fry until crisp. Turn spinach into the frying pan with fried meat, and heat thoroughly; then add one-third cupful of vinegar or lemon juice for each pint of spinach and season with salt. Turn at once into serving dish and garnish with sliced hard-boiled egg.

Rhubarb and Raisin Pie.

Did any of the readers ever put raisins over the top of the rhubarb, about two inches apart? No more plain rhubarb pies for me after trying them with the raisins. Another thing I do which perhaps other sisters do not, and that is, I never peel my rhubarb for pies. I wash it and wipe each stalk carefully and then slice it into the plate. I think it makes a much richer pie that way.—Boston Globe.

Peach a la Bordelaise.

Use canned peaches for this. Put them in a flat gratin dish and pour over the following mixture: Two ounces of butter, two ounces of flour, one ounce of sugar, half a pint of milk and peach sirup, four eggs. Cook butter, flour, sugar and milk in a stewpan. When cold, add yolks and whipped whites of the eggs last. Bake half an hour in moderate oven.

Creamed Celery and Egg.

A leftover of creamed celery was rewarmed by setting dish in cold water and letting come to boil, then pushed to less hot place on stove. Just before removing from heat, two leftover hard-boiled eggs were chopped and cut into the cream. Served on toast as a supper dish.

Fish Toast.

Take one cupful of cold flaked fish, free from skin and bones. Heat in water sufficient to moisten; add butter, pepper and salt. When hot pour on slices of buttered toast, garnish with eggs poached in muffin rings.

To Clean the Range.

An ordinary blackboard eraser is splendid to keep near the kitchen range to wipe off the top; the range is kept clean and does not need to be washed or polished but once or twice a week.

Needs No Starch.

Fine damask linen needs no starch. If sufficiently dampened and ironed until dry it will have all the necessary dressing.