

Released when received.

Office of Information, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture.

120 ENGLISH SPARROWS TO THE SQUARE MILE.

Bird Census Seems To Show That American Birds Are
Too Few But That Their Number Will Increase
With The Human Population.

Washington, D.C.

Sixty pairs of English

sparrows to the square mile or seven to every 100 native birds is the average throughout the United States, according to the "preliminary census of birds of the United States," which has just been completed by the Government biologists. A new bulletin (No. 187) tells all about this census, and bird lovers may obtain it by writing to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

The census seems to show that the bird most abundantly found in the United States is the robin, with the English sparrow a close second. In the northeastern United States, where the census was most thorough, there were, on an average, six pairs of robins to each farm of 58 acres. English sparrows averaged five pairs per farm. No other bird is anywhere nearly so abundant as either of these but some are numerous enough to make their total run well into the millions. Taking 100 robins as a unit, other desirable birds were noted in the following proportions:

oatbirds -- 49	brown thrashers -- 37
house wrens 28	kingbirds - - - 27
bluebirds 26.	

The statistics regarding bluebirds are particularly gratifying. Only a few years ago nearly the whole bluebird population of the eastern United States was destroyed by a severe winter but there are now several million bluebirds in this locality.

As for density of population, on each acre of farm land covered by the census, there was an average of one pair of birds. The record for density comes from Chevy Chase, Maryland, where 161 pairs were found nesting on 23 acres. Thirty-four species of birds were represented.

While there are no previous official censuses of the Federal Government that are comparable with this one, several censuses have before been taken by individuals, on more or less limited areas. One census taken in 1901 by a specialist, agrees very closely with the Government's census as far as the total number of

birds is concerned. It differs, however, regarding the number of English sparrows, showing 106 pairs to the square mile or 18 to every 100 native birds while the new census, as previously stated, showed only 60 pairs to the square mile or seven to every 100.

BIRD POPULATION LESS THAN IT OUGHT TO BE.

The present bird population is much less than it ought to be, according to the biologists. If birds were given more protection and encouragement there would be an increase in numbers which would be accompanied by a corresponding decrease in the number of insect pests. That breeding birds prefer thickly-inhabited centers of population to forests is one of the conclusions of the census. This seems to refute the widespread belief that humans and birds are naturally antagonistic. It also seems probable that as our human population increases so will our bird population.

VOLUNTEER CENSUS TAKERS DESIRED FOR 1915.

The biologists of the department plan to repeat this census for several years and on a much larger scale if bird lovers throughout the land are willing to aid in the work. The department's Biological Survey furnishes the necessary instruction and report blanks to whoever wishes to cooperate. There are no funds to pay for this work and it therefore depends on volunteer observers. Farmers in the West and South are particularly requested to help, as these sections did not receive sufficient attention during the past year. The 1915 circular of instructions will be sent early in the spring to the volunteer census takers.