



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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BIRDS VALUABLE ALLIES  
IN WAR ON INSECT PESTS

Insects and grubs cause an annual loss of \$800,000,000 to the agricultural interests of the United States, and our people pay another \$800,000,000 each year, trying to get rid of these pests. This heavy expenditure, the burden of which is borne in large part by farmers, fruit growers, and gardeners, would be reduced if adequate provision were constantly made for the needs of our valuable insectivorous birds including protection for their lives.

Birds, according to the Biological Survey of the United States Department of Agriculture, are one of nature's important agencies for keeping down the overwhelming hordes of insect life. Nest boxes should be put up and shrubbery planted to make up for the disappearance of the hollow trees and young wild growth in which the birds once built their nests. Water for drinking and bathing should be supplied in the summer season and shelter and food provided in winter. Protection of birds from their natural and unnatural enemies is not the least important consideration.

The boy with the air rifle, the native or the foreign-born adult with his gun, the red squirrel and other small animals, the rain storm and the wind storm, and the house cat all take their toll of wild bird life. Years ago the depredations of the cat on birds caused little concern, but now that probably twenty-five million cats blanket the United States, people are waking up to the increasing necessity of protecting birds against them. It is not necessary that

householders part with their pets, but these potential bird destroyers should be kept from unduly increasing if the effort is to be made more effective to prevent them from killing the song birds.

During the nesting season especially, watchful care is needed, particularly at the time when the fledglings, unable to make full use of their undeveloped wings, flutter to the ground. The sight of helpless young birds hopping across the lawn excites the predatory instinct of even a well-fed house cat. In a short time the wings of these birds will have grown strong enough for them to fly a little way, when the danger of being caught is lessened. Until the young birds can look out for themselves, the cat should not be allowed to leave the house, unless closely watched.

Roosevelt said "It is the duty of every man, woman, and child to protect the birds." Everyone who realizes the incalculable number of insects which even one bird will destroy in a season should be willing to take some pains to protect these charming and useful little aerial allies of the farmer and orchardist.

During the nesting season of our wild birds the United States Department of Agriculture asks that all persons try to protect from harm from all sources the birds which live in the vicinity of their homes and fields.

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