1923

Where Are the Birds?

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Recommended Citation
Guthrie, J. E. (1923) "Where Are the Birds?," The Iowa Homemaker: Vol. 3 : No. 1 , Article 3.
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol3/iss1/3
A week ago, as I passed from my home to the college campus, about two blocks, and then across the campus to the office, I counted the number of birds nests that I could see remaining in the trees—27 nests were counted. I looked for several others that I knew were there last summer, but the storms of winter and other agencies had destroyed them during the half-year since they were bird homes. The majority of these nests—probably about two-thirds—were those of robins; the rest had homed catbirds, red-winged blackbirds, goldfinches, orioles, and probably some other species.

Where have our birds been since they built these nests and fledged in them? Are the birds we see as the vanguard of the northward-flying legion the ones we watched with so much interest last summer; or are they merely others of their kind, spending the year in the south with them the requisite jewelry to bring them fame.

Some species whose homes are farther north. It is occasionally the case, no doubt, that our Iowa robins go farther south in some particular years, but it is very likely that the several hundred thousands that one may easily count almost any February or March afternoon as they cross the woods near the Golf and Country Club to their nightly rendezvous in the woods probably far north of our campus of Iowa State College, there were quite a number that bore away with them the requisite jewelry to bring them fame. Concerning this matter of the tribe of warblers and flycatchers of the United States in mild seasons, I believe nearly if not quite all birds found abundant numbers of the seasons south of the United States winter in the Gulf States. Some in numbers, at least, follow the same migration path year after year. This is a very interesting occurrence. Some individuals have even fed at the same station on their southward journey in the fall and then again in the spring migration flight, after having wintered in some of the countries south of the United States. Stations for banding birds in Mexico and in Central and South America are needed to tell us more about just which particular birds winter in each locality. Some day we may expect to obtain in this way enough charts of the entire life wanderings of many individuals of each species to send imaginary messages, at least, to our friends in Missouri or Arkansas, in Florida or Haiti, in Hidalgo or Yucatan, among the banana plantations or Honduras or Panama or even in Venezuela or Brazil.

Of the "teeming hosts a-wing," one of the most beautiful and interesting, as well as one of the largest of the tribe of warblers and flycatchers, is the American Robin. The name comes from the well-known fact that in the region where the myrtle trees bear their waxy berries in abundance, these birds feed very largely on this food. Now, in the middle of March, these birds are mobilizing down in their winter homes in Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica and Porto Rico, as well as in eastern Mexico and even as far south as Panama, for the long journey thru the tree tops clear across the United States and sometimes far north into the British American territories and to their true home—their breeding grounds.
Some of the more adventurous souls among them started north even in the latter part of February. Perhaps they were the ones that had the farthest to go. At Ames, the earliest of all the warbler tribe to troop thru our trees harvesting the tender green leaves, they are enjoying their wriggling, hungry selves among the tender green leaves. On they go from here to the northward, arriving early in May in Alberta and Saskatchewan and some of them still nothing for another fortnight until they are in the Yukon and Mackenzie River countries.

We have another of the best-known warblers here. We think of it as one of our own birds because it remains with us during the summer, flashing its golden little body in and out among the branches of our fruit and forest trees. It is the Yellow Warbler, also known as the Summer Warbler, but perhaps best known to the boys and girls of Iowa as the Wild Canary. Northern Alaska sees some of them in the heat of summer and in Western Peru a few are wintering among the bright colored birds of the tropics.

Probably no single bird of the species ever sees both Peru and Alaska in the course of a lifetime but the range of the species is extremely large. Later than the Myrtle Warbler, this yellow beauty has journeyed up the Mississippi River valley, that most wonderful of all the bird migration pathways in all the whole world, by the middle of April or a little later, as far as St. Louis. By the first of May it has arrived in Iowa and is soon spread thru the state. Some of them nest here during the summer.

And who does not know and love that perfect little jewel of a bird, of insect-size rather than a bird-size that emerald-set ruby that hovers in front of the honeysuckle trumpets around our homes feeding on the sweets of the flowers, and as we now know, on many a tiny insect as well. Of course I am thinking of the Ruby-throated hummingbird. It seems almost incredible that a midget of a fellow could take the amazing journey every year from nearly all parts of the United States to Cuba, Mexico and Panama and back again. What a bundle of energy, hatched in a downy thimble nest from a little pearl of an egg the size of a pea. Two weeks of brooding by the dainty little mother and before the hungry wings of flesh, naked and helpless, but with the ever-insistent, towering appetite always found in a feathered youngster. Who could believe that in those two months those tiny wings would take the rapid, sustained flights over the thousands of wet and dry leagues to the land where the winter wears land of perpetual bloom who would suppose that such a little honey-lover would have the spring spunk to pull out while flowers are still blooming and whir away up into the land where the winds are not always kind, at the impelling inward urge of the nesting instinct. In early May we shall see him if the fates are kind.

And these are but a few of the birds that are our neighbors every year; some of them merely hailing us in passing, others familiarly with us the year thru.

April will bring the bluebirds, the ones that will stay with us, if those hardy earlier ones that have been seen here within the past week survive this snow storm they will probably go on farther north to test the hospitality of the Canadians.

About the first week in May Jenny Wren will be buzzing in on us again. She is somewhere down in the Gulf States now. That is where her ticket read when she left us last September. Or was it the first part of October? As usual she will be the very personification of officious busy-ness. And those of us who have watched the untiring efforts of a pair of house Wrens scurrying about for food for those half dozen ravenously hungry little mouths, their numbers in our home, keep in mind that the end of the breeding season, will remember what a myriad of worms from our gardens disappeared into those gaping mouths and will post up a big WELCOME WRENS placard.

Her Summer Lingerie

By LUCILE BARTA

Let's have a lingerie shower for Jane, instead of the stupid linen and thin kind that people always have for bridal beauty. Everybody has agreed.

"But let's not all give pink satin camisoles," she warned, "they're passe."

Consequently we have had to haunt the shops to see what is "good" in lingerie.

White, flesh and peach are the only colors we could find in new undies, with emphasis on the white. The bizarre array of tints on display last season has completely disappeared. Virgin white is again the vogue.

Laces are the dominant note in decoration. Fillet, Irish or valenciennes, some kind of lace is found on every other garment. For those who can afford them, there are exquisite patterns in real laces. Real laces are the dominant note in decoration. Additional touches to this floral color. A petticoat of corresponding color.

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Cotton seems to have retained the right to use the rainbow tints to beautify itself. The use of Japanese crepe which is noted for its wealth of hues is no doubt the reason. The usual crepe and silk kimonas had crepe-de-chine for a simple nightie speaks of restful slumber. Another nightie that attracted our attention consisted of narrow stripes of nainsook in a Marguerite bodice, and finished with lace edging to match.

Pajamas, not to be outdone by the retiring nightie, display themselves in varied style and color. This garment alone seems to have retained the right to use the rainbow tints to beautify itself. The use of Japanese crepe which is noted for its wealth of hues is no doubt the reason. The usual crepe and silk kimonas had crepe-de-chine for a simple nightie speaks of restful slumber. Another nightie that attracted our attention consisted of narrow stripes of nainsook in a Marguerite bodice, and finished with lace edging to match.

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