

# 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



KILLDEER

BLUE BIRD

CHIPPING SPARROW

BARN SWALLOW

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 nighthawk 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 agriculturist's 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, bill bugs, bark beetles, squash bugs and moths of the cotton worm."

The killdeer plover is one of the noisy birds. A part of its Latin name is "vociferus," which speaks for itself. While the killdeer ordinarily is accounted a game bird it is poor eating. The good that it does should save it from persecution, but gunners are not apt to discriminate, and so the killdeer frequently suffers. This bird lives in the open country. More than 99 per cent of its food consists of animal matter. The record shows: Beetles, 37.06 per cent; other insects, as grasshoppers, caterpillars, ants, bugs, caddis flies, dragon flies and two-winged flies, 29.54 per cent, and other invertebrates as centipedes, spiders, ticks, oyster worms, earthworms, snails, crabs and other crustacea, 21.12 per cent. Vegetable matter composes 2.28 per cent of the total food, and is chiefly made up of weeds, such as buttonweed, smartweed, foxtail grass and nightshade. The alfalfa weevil, a new and de-

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 beneficent 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  
Fronks 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.

## ASKS WILSON TO ACT

LEWIS OF ILLINOIS INTRODUCES PEACE RESOLUTION IN THE SENATE.

## PRESIDENT WOULD AID ALL

America Will Not Plead Cause of Any Single Belligerent, but Will Serve Best Interests of All Nations—Berlin in Favor of U. S. Mediation.

Washington, May 27.—A resolution requesting the president, unless incompatible with the public interest, to suggest to warring nations of Europe that the United States undertake mediation was introduced into the senate on Thursday by Senator Lewis of Illinois, to lie on the table for discussion later.

The resolution would authorize the president to propose that the belligerents declare a truce and that each of them select a neutral country as its representative on a board of arbitration thus created:

Each selected neutral would name one member of the board, over which the president or his representative would preside as referee. Under the plan each belligerent would present its demands or claims to the board, which would be authorized to arrive at an equitable adjustment.

The resolution recites that it is suggested as an expression of the desire for world peace and not of favoritism for any of the belligerents.

President Wilson told callers that the intervention of a neutral in behalf of peace in Europe could rest only on a mutual understanding by the belligerents that terms to be arranged are to conserve the interests of all, and of the world at large, rather than those of a particular nation or group of nations among the warring powers.

Mr. Wilson gave the impression that he would make peace suggestions only when the conditions he outlined were likely of fulfillment.

Berlin (via London), May 27.—A wireless dispatch from the United States giving the substance of President Wilson's speech at Charlotte, N. C., in which he referred to the possibility of American mediation, is given the place of honor in the morning papers. Their comments, together with the wide interest shown by the German public, show how important this news is regarded.

Though definitely stated nowhere, there is little doubt that Germany is willing to consider a tender of good offices to inaugurate peace negotiations. The former attitude that America had disqualified itself as a peace mediator on account of munitions shipments to the allies has now changed. If President Wilson can hold out any tangible possibilities of peace through his mediation, Germany will undoubtedly be willing to consider such suggestions.

## NAVAL APPROPRIATION BILL

Committee Reports Measure to House Carrying \$241,449,151.99—Building Item Has \$98,859,378.

Washington, May 26.—The naval appropriation bill, the biggest national defense measure—was reported to the house on Wednesday from the naval affairs committee. It carries a total of \$241,449,151.99, about \$90,000,000 more than last year's bill.

The biggest item is the building program. Counting the cost for the first year of the program provided in the measure and making appropriations for continued work on vessels authorized heretofore, with the ammunition supplies for the ships that will be finished during the coming year it amounts to \$98,859,378.

## APPROVES L. D. BRANDEIS

Senate Committee Votes 10 to 8 in Favor of His Selection for Supreme Court.

Washington, May 26.—The senate judiciary committee, after weeks of consideration, by a vote of 10 to 8, decided on Wednesday to make a favorable report to the senate on the nomination of Louis D. Brandeis to be an associate justice of the Supreme court. The result was a straight party vote, the ten Democrats voting to favorably report the nomination while the eight Republicans voted against such action.

## Russ to Take Offensive.

Geneva, May 27.—Russia is preparing for military operations of great importance on the east front in order to relieve the German pressure against the French at Verdun and the Austro-Hungarian pressure against the Italians in southern Tyrol, according to information from diplomatic source.

## To Smash Turk and Bulgar.

Rome, May 29.—A terrific smash within a few weeks, aimed at eliminating the Turks and Bulgars from the war, will be the allies' first great stroke for peace. This is a report in general circulation here.

## Thaw Shoots Down Fokker.

Paris, May 29.—Lieut. William Thaw, an American member of the French air corps, shot down a Fokker machine, it was announced by the war office. He was wounded in the arm by a bullet.

## MUST RELEASE MAIL

U. S. NOTE TO BRITAIN AND FRANCE IS MADE PUBLIC BY STATE DEPARTMENT.

## TO MAKE CLAIM FOR LOSSES

Time in Which Change Must Be Effected Is Not Specified in Message, But Washington Government Expects Prompt Action.

Washington, May 29.—The United States, denouncing interference with neutral mails, has notified Great Britain and France that it can no longer tolerate the wrongs which American citizens have suffered and continue to suffer through the "lawless practice" those governments have indulged in, and that only a radical change in policy, restoring the United States to its full rights as a neutral power, will be satisfactory.

This notification is given in the latest American communication to the two governments, the text of which was made public on Saturday by the state department. The time in which the change must be effected is not specified, but the United States expects prompt action.

"Onerous and vexatious abuses which have been perpetrated by the British and French governments in seizing and censoring neutral mails are recited in the communication, and answers are made to the legal arguments contained in the reply of the entente governments to the first American note on the subject.

It is vigorously set forth that not only have American commercial interests been injured but that the rights of property have been violated and the rules of international law and custom palpably disregarded. Notice is served that the United States soon will press claims against the British and French governments for the losses which already have been sustained.

The death of Cervantes will go far toward clearing up the banditry in this section.

## U. S. TROOPS KILL VILLA CHIEF

Notorious Bandit Cervantes Slain After Attack on Engineers—American Killed and Two Wounded.

Field Headquarters United States Army, near Nampulpa, Mex., via radio to Columbus, N. M., May 29.—A short sharp battle between a force of American army engineers and a gang of Mexican bandits under the leadership of the notorious Candelaria Cervantes, one of Pancho Villa's most trusted lieutenants, was fought south of Cruces.

Three Americans were wounded, one so badly that he died a short time after, and two of the bandits were killed, several wounded and the band scattered. Among those killed was Cervantes himself.

Lance Corporal Marksbury, attached to a machine gun detachment of the Seventeenth infantry, was the American soldier killed in the clash with Villistas near Cruces, Mex. Marksbury's home was at Herrodsburg, Ky.

The engineers were working on road repairs six miles south of Cruces. With them were a few soldiers.

The Mexicans made a surprise attack. Cervantes has been hunted from pillar to post the last two weeks.

The Mexicans dashed over a small hill and down on the unsuspecting Americans as they worked in a small ravine. Three Americans dropped at the first volley. The soldiers rallied instantly after that first volley, and returned shot for shot at close range.

The body of Cervantes was positively identified by residents of Las Cruces.

One of the Americans wounded was Private Hullitt of the Seventeenth infantry, who was in charge of the machine gun, and who killed both the Mexicans. His wound is not believed to be serious.

## JAMES J. HILL SERIOUSLY ILL

Dr. Mayo Called to St. Paul by Magistrate's Son—Stricken Ten Days Ago.

St. Paul, Minn., May 29.—James J. Hill, railroad magnate, is seriously ill. This was revealed when Dr. W. J. Mayo, the famous surgeon of Rochester, Minn., came here on Friday in a special train for the second examination of the ailing man in four days. The case, while serious, is not one to cause alarm, Doctor Mayo said after the second examination. Mr. Hill has been ill for ten days. He was stricken May 15. Doctor Gillfillan, the attending physician, said after his consultation with Doctor Mayo, that Mr. Hill's condition is not serious and no operation will be necessary. Doctor Gillfillan says intestinal trouble followed by slight infection caused Mr. Hill's illness.

## Nat Goodwin's Wife Ill.

New York, May 29.—Margaret Moreland, fifth wife of Nat Goodwin, is seriously ill at St. Elizabeth's hospital where she underwent an operation. Miss Moreland was formerly an actress in Mr. Goodwin's company.

## Dr. Timothy Dwight Dead.

New Haven, Conn., May 29.—Rev. Dr. Timothy Dwight, former president of Yale university, died here on Friday in his eighty-sixth year. Doctor Dwight was born in Norwich, Conn., in 1828.