

STORIES OF BIRD LIFE.

From the Kennebec Journal. It is our belief that the birds are more forward with their nesting this year than they have been for many seasons past.

In early June we saw young Kingbirds and young song sparrows hopping about on the fences. Before the close of June the first crop of barn swallows was big enough to fly, and while we write this, the birds are busy attending to the rearing of a second brood.

Swan's Eggs Hatched by Thunder. From the Washington Post. A beautiful white swan sat patiently on her nest in a zoo.

"She's a settin'," her keeper said. "There's seven eggs under her, and they'll all be ready to hatch out by the time the next thunder-storm comes up."

"Thunderstorm?" said the visitor. "What has a thunderstorm got to do with it?" "It'll hatch out of the eggs," the keeper explained.

"Swan's eggs are so bloomin' hard that nothin' short of a good clap o' thunder will burst 'em. It's a well understood fact among naturalists that they will never hatch unless they are struck by a thunderstorm."

Did you never examine a swan's egg? Why, hang it, it's as hard as a rock. Considerably impressed, the visitor sought out the superintendent of the zoo.

"Your birdkeeper," he said, "tells me that swan's eggs are so hard that it takes a thunderclap to hatch them. Is this true?" "It is a tradition," the superintendent said glibly. "I think it true. You and I, however, could just call it a tradition—an odd, pleasant, interesting tradition."

Advent of English Sparrows in West. From the Topeka Herald. The first English sparrows were brought to Kansas in 1874.

F. W. Giles received the idea of importing some of these birds. He shipped in twenty-eight of them in Topeka until all but five had died. At last the five were turned loose to take their chance of life or death.

Though Giles had no hope that they would live, they fooled him. They took up their home in the neighborhood. The following autumn there were twelve birds. The second summer found sixty, and the third summer about 300. Then they increased so fast that no count could be kept, and in the twenty-five years which followed they spread all over the West.

Seagull a Weatherwise Bird. From the Lakota Tribune. The seagull makes a splendid living barometer. If a convoy of seagulls fly seaward early in the morning sailors and fishermen know that the wind will be from the west and fair, but if the birds keep inland—though there be no haze hanging out toward the sea to denote unpleasant weather—interested folk know that the elements will be unfavorable.

How Sea Birds Get a Drink. From the Portland Oregonian. "When I was a cabin boy," said an elderly sailor, "I often used to wonder, seeing thousands of miles out to sea, what they done for fresh water when they got thirsty."

"One day a squall answered that question for me. It was a hot and glittering day in the tropics, and the clear blue overhead a black rain cloud appeared all of a sudden. Then out of the empty space, over a hundred sea birds came dartin' from every direction. They got under the rain cloud and they waited there for about ten minutes, circling round and round, when the rain began to fall, they drank their fill."

"In the tropics, where the great seabirds sail thousands of miles away from shore, they get their drink in the air. They smell out a storm a long way off; they travel a hundred miles, maybe, to get under it, and they swallow enough raindrops to keep them goin'."

Ornamental Nest of Golden Eagles. From the Chicago News. In Scotland a naturalist has found a golden eagle's nest that contained a rare bird, carried thither by the birds as an adornment. An observer in California has reported that a pair of golden eagles there decorated their nest with sacks.

"When the kite builds look to lesser birds," says the speaker, "but in the tropics, where the birds are so numerous, they build their nests in the holes of trees, and they travel a hundred miles, maybe, to get under it, and they swallow enough raindrops to keep them goin'."

Why a Bird Killer Put Up His Gun. From the Henney (Okla.) Clipper. One of our best practical farmers related to us the other day how he came to change his mind about killing birds. He said he formerly took a great deal of pleasure with his gun and dogs. About six months after coming to the Territory he told his wife he would go out and kill a few quail. It was about a clock, so calling his dogs he started out on his own farm.

He soon shot three quail, and his wife, knowing that if he got thoroughly interested in the pursuit of game he would be out till long after supper, time, persuaded him to come back to the house and they would have supper, when he could go again. "All right," said the farmer; "I will dress these and we'll have them for supper. His wife, however, on the fulness of the craws of the birds, and on opening one it was found packed full of chinch bugs! Out of curiosity they counted and found over four hundred dead chinch bugs in the craw of one quail."

Said the farmer in relating the circumstance to us: "I just cleaned up the gun and have not shot a bird since, and if you'll come down to my place of a morning or evening and see the birds, I'll show you my farm you'll think they knew their friends."

Travels of the Golden Plover. From the Saturday Evening Post. Some of our shore birds appear to make travelling their chief occupation. The American golden plover arrives in the first week of June in the bleak, wind swept "barren grounds" of Alaska, above the Arctic Circle and far beyond the tree line, and while the lakes are still frozen it triumphantly fashions a shabby little nest in the moss. By August 15 it is in Labrador, where it stuffs itself with quantities of "crowsberries" that its flesh is actually stained by the dark purple juice. From Nova Scotia it strikes out to the west and takes a direct course by way of the Indies, 1,000 miles away, finally reaching southern Brazil and the prairies of Argentina. "Sixteen thousand miles does it travel in order to spend ten weeks on the Arctic coast!"

The choice of route and distance covered by a single flight are governed chiefly by food supply.

Prairie Chickens to Be Plentiful. From the Topeka Capital. Reports from Western Kansas indicate that prairie chickens will be plentiful again this fall.

Prairie chickens, like the buffalo, succumbed to the advance of the horse civilization. During the days of the first pioneers prairie chickens were plentiful in Kansas as English sparrows are to-day. As the country settled up they gradually disappeared. It was not until recently that they put them out of business—it was the presence of the white man and the things that followed in his wake.

Robin Seeks Human Aid. From the London Daily Mail. As a gentleman of Portholow, Cornwall, was walking in the neighborhood, a robin attracted his attention by flapping its wings in his face, chirping in a distressed and excited manner, and fluttering back and forth between him and a point in the hedge.

He went to the spot and found a rat in the robin's nest devouring one of the young ones. The rat ran off as the bird was knocked senseless, when the robin flew at and pecked it viciously. When it was

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