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Sent 5 negatives

BIRDS DIFFER LIKE PEOPLE

by

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Use the Audubon Society

Use

Some of the members of the Audubon Society seem to think that certain birds act a good deal like people, some preferring to live in the noisy city, others on a farm or in the big trees of the mountains.

"Because of my work I have to live in the city," said one. Another said "Even though we work in the city, I don't like to live in crowded houses as I think it is more fun to have a garden and fruit trees."

"I don't like the city either," said a robin, dabbling in a little ditch between a farmer's rows of beans and corn. "It's safer out here and I get more food. The best things for my children are the angleworms as well as the insects about the trees, and especially the cherries and berries. It seems safer to nest around the house if they don't have cats. There are too many of these in the city."

Since we have lived with the birds on our farm and studied their habits for nearly forty years, we notice a big change in the birds. The city has moved out nearer to us, some of our old birds are gone on and new ones have come in. We have a lot of bird houses around our place, and the western bluebirds used to nest in these and in the holes of our old apple trees. The old apple trees are still here, but the bluebirds have been gone for some years. Several pairs of western house wrens used to squabble for the houses, but last year only one pair nested in a little house near the study door. Unfortunately a pair of chipmunks came in and destroyed their eggs. We caught them, but the wrens departed and did not nest last year or come back this year at all. We also had a pair of Seattle wrens that always nested down on the river bank, but none of them have been here for years now. Years ago four pairs of violet-green swallows used to occupy our bird houses, but this year only one pair nested here.

In the early days when we first came out to this wild, wooded region to clear it and make a home, we used to see quail and grouse and hear

the bobwhite's call down the hill of a frosty morning. We took pictures of the nests and eggs of quail out in the old orchard. Gradually they disappeared. Then we introduced some more quail and they fed with the chickens and seemed to feel at home. But again they faded away with the invasion of new homes and the clearing of the land. None have been here for many years. We also brought in some Hungarian partridges and they were big, gentle birds that wandered about our fields and shrubbery. But these fine foreign birds soon went the way of the rest of the game birds, and even the bobwhite quail that used to scamper over the lawns and sit on the fence posts and give their clear calls are gone for good.

At least two pairs of rufous hummingbirds always nested in our blackberry vines or on a hanging dogwood limb, trusting little bumblebees that would even light on a finger to feed their young cupped in a hand. They have left us, and we don't know why. And the Shufeldt juncos, those "Psic-psic-psicing" little black-heads that built neat cup nests on the ground at the foot of a tree or shrub, and gathered in groups on the driveway to pick up gravel -- it never occurred to us that they would not be here forever. But not one junco has been seen or heard this year. It leaves an emptiness in the air. One pair of warbling vireos played and sang about the trees early in the season, but soon we missed their voices and we found no little hanging basket nest.

But we have not been deserted by all of our birds, for the robins have nested as usual in the ivy on the house and a number of them in the rosebushes on the tennis court. The songsparrows would make a good sized regiment and have feasted on crumbs and squabbled about the yard. And the faithful towhees have out-done themselves in bringing out broods. Two pairs nested down near the river. Two more had cup nests fairly sunk into the ground in the thick hillside below the house. The mottled grown young appeared at the feeding tray under the kitchen window and "meowed" in kitten tones along with their elders as if it was the regular thing to do. There have been at least four pairs nesting twice this year. Stanley

Jewett says in the "Birds of Oregon" that junco eggs are usually laid in May. Our nesting dates extend from May 3 to June 25, although young of the year are always on the wing before the later date."

Here is a record which I think may be of interest to bird-lovers. I found what I am sure is the third nest of a pair of towhees that nested on the hillside below the house. I found a nest and four eggs on August 1. This nest was built perhaps a week before I found it. The mother towhee was not wild. She staid on the nest when I came up within a few feet and watched her. This nest was not hidden as much as the others and was not tucked deep under grass or bushes. The eggs were hatched August 6. Later I put up my blind near the nest and set up my camera three feet away. The pair didn't seem to be afraid of it for both parents picked up little bits of grass and leaves on the ground and fed them to the children. I also put a little box of bread crumbs near the nest. When she came in with food for the young, each time she would hop over and get bits of bread five or six times and feed the nestlings - then go away to hunt more food.

There were some big trees nearby and the nest was not in the sun, so I couldn't get kodachromes. The afternoon of August 11, I took four negatives of the female feeding the young, and one of the male who didn't come very often. I got only once at him for a picture. Watching the young, I noticed that they began leaving the nest August 15 before they could really fly. The parents seemed to like this and followed them around and kept feeding. I wondered whether some of the young birds, since they were not keeping together, might not get food enough to live. However, they kept cheeping so the parents knew where they were.

No band-tailed pigeons had ever taken up a home in this region until last year when a flock arrived all of a sudden, and they staid all through the season, and are on hand again this year. We counted seven sitting on the telephone wire one day. The flock usually stay up in the tall fir trees, but one day meandering through the brush and mixture of small

willows and firs on Stanley Jewett's place, we found a flimsy nest in a small fir. A little later we found another nest in a low tree, and it had one egg in it. This was only some ten feet from the ground. Something must have happened for the bird deserted this nest also.