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JUNE, THE SUMMIT OF THE SONGSTERS
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The bird world is full of courtships and weddings in March and April. The selection of home sites and the building of nests occupies the month of May, but the flood of feathered population rolls in through all the month of June. The common range of the songster family is from quadruplets on up. While the songsters reach the summit of increase in June, the vast army of enemies lowers the census so it shows little change toward the end of the year. Some species are coming up and others are dropping down.

June is the bird month of the year. The dawn of every day opens with a most inspiring concert. Then starts the search of songsters among the myriads of insect life, while nesting progresses. The breakfast of the bantlings lasts from early morning till twilight. So many infants require their own weight in food in a day's time. Why not? A day's growth of a nestling matches up with the year's development of your own child. How busy a mother is while she listens to the cradle-song of her mate. Birds are like people. Some fathers help care for the children; others sit on the treetops and chirp.

Our song birds are not only an inspiration to the human race. They teach us that a home should be surrounded by the beauties of Nature and the key to life is health and happiness, not the search for wealth. Birds do not like city life. It is too artificial. The garden surrounded by trees, the open fields, the stretch of the forests, the bush-bordered brook, the country

sunshine and the blue sky that borders the mountain-tops are not to be compared with paved streets and sloping roofs, with chimney-pots and skyscrapers. The companionship of birds and the out-of-doors brings peace and contentment.

Most all of our songsters might be termed civilized birds. Few take to the real wilderness areas. They prefer a farming district. Many have a real liking for human society. The meadowlark likes a cultivated field. Long ago, he followed the frontiersman and sang over every acre that was reclaimed. You may hear him far back in the mountains where a settler has cleared a five-acre tract and built a cabin. He has lost a shade of color in comparison with his eastern cousin, but the western meadowlark has developed a variety of songs and richer notes.

It is common for visitors to think that Oregon has few songsters. They forget that it is impossible to know the woods in a day. It takes time and study to know a bird by its dress and flight. It is easier to recognize a person by his walk. The habits and actions of birds differ. The call note or song of one species is so different from another. It varies much more than the voice of the human being.

Every bird lover has his favorite songster, but according to musical standards, who can name the master singer of our bird chorus? Is the meadowlark the peer of the thrush, or the song sparrow equal to the water ouzel? It is difficult to answer because bird songs are largely matters of association and sug-

gestion. At special times and places or under mental emotions, the caroling of some bird always sinks deep into one's memory.

One can never forget the song of the winter wren in the heart of the wildest forest. If it is a long trail and one sits down to rest for a few minutes, he may be greeted by a tinkling song that is thin and high. The quavering notes are shaken out rapidly as if they were never going to stop.

Few songs are more thrilling than the caroling of the robin at sunrise on a crisp spring morning. The red-breast awakes the day, while the russet-backed thrush ushers it out with a vesper hymn. The robin is bold and boisterous, a feathered plebian. How round and genuine his notes are, hardy, frolicsome, neighborly. The song of the thrush is one that ranges the whole scale of pure emotion. He sings at best from the shaded canyons and the dark tree-covered lawns. No bird has a more golden melody, or the shy quality that tells his real character.

Any day in June, one can find the nest of a thrush where the bushes are thick and the water trickles through a heavy growth of firs and dogwoods. It is a leafy, mossy home. Moss is as essential to the thrush as mud to the robin and lichens to the hummingbird. Robin has learned to build in a tree at the side of a house or in the orchard. His reason is for better protection. He belongs to the thrush family. He is the fore-runner, but what a difference.

Approach a robin's nest, and he sets up a vehement cry of alarm that arouses every bird in the neighborhood. He is unnecessarily noisy and fidgety. On the other hand, the thrush is an aristocrat of fine feeling. Approach his nest, and he seems anxious but does not spread his emotions to the world. His note is a soft whistle as he flits through the trees like a shadow. To be sure, he is scared but does not relieve his feelings by a great show and fuss. Each time a mother thrush comes with food for her young she lingers at the nest edge. Most birds are away as soon as possible. She never fails to examine her nestlings or sit in quiet meditation as if to caress her babies in pure mother love.

Perhaps the best little friend of every rural home is the song sparrow. This is a species common throughout the whole land, whether in the mountains or along the rivers, at the seashore, or in the dry chaparral-covered deserts. In a bush by the front door one can watch these birds work. They twine the grass stems around and around and shape them with their breasts. Clothes do not make this bird. The male wears a plain brown coat, a speckled vest with a black spot in the center as a mark of identity. He has a repertoire of song rolled up in his tiny brain that wins the affection of any audience. He is an artist and loves his art. He sings for the sake of the music. He is well named, for in the whole bird world no other sings so long or so often.