

# FOR FARMERS, STOCK BREEDERS AND GARDENERS

## NEWSY NOTES

BY AGRICOLA

### NOTES FROM HUNTER RIVER

I am now the happy possessor of a copy of Dr. Taverner's "Birds of Eastern Canada," and this by the kindness of Mr. R. W. Tufts, the Chief Migratory Bird Officer of the Maritime Provinces. This book is out of print, and is not likely to be reprinted in its present Eastern form, I believe. This enhances its value, in my eyes, for I may be branded as provincial in my natural history study. And before passing on I must remind the young folk that Mr. Tufts has given three copies of this fine work as prizes in the Bird-house Contest.

That this Contest is working to a successful issue in at least one district, these notes from Hunter River will attest. They are sent in by "A Friend of the Birds" and read as follows: "Dear Agricola:—I must tell you of the success we are having with our bird contest in our Women's Institute here. Already one little girl has carried away the first prize as a swallow has taken her house. It had been there about ten days when first reported to me. The children, with the strong sympathy and cooperation of our very excellent teacher, are greatly enthused and it is really wonderful what strides they have made in bird knowledge. Some of the parents have "caught the fever" also; they have discovered quite a number of birds' nests and watched the hatching process, and some are interested in the little fledglings now.

My goldfinches have come back. I heard their voices one morning and looking up, saw four of them. Two of them are around every day now, so I think we shall have another young brood to feed on our Cosmos seed. The children have reported a "marsh hen," cranes and sandpipers; one little girl who has a birdhouse out, had a pair of robins build their nest about a foot above her house!

On Sunday my husband, while sitting on the lawn, heard a great commotion overhead, and saw a crow-blackbird—a grackle—flying over with a small bird (very much alive) in its mouth. The little fellow was making a lot of noise, and as he was quite large, the blackbird was obliged to alight. My husband threw a stone and scared the blackbird away, and the little fellow escaped into the grass. We thought it was a song sparrow. This was our first experience of the killer blackbird.

Today I also had the pleasure (or perhaps displeasure) of seeing for the first time a pair of starlings. I saw them at close range, from a building and got a real good look. There is a pair of Canada geese near here, pure and not mongrels as I first thought; they are beautiful birds, and at twilight on the pond in a still evening, they resemble black swans, as they arch their necks and preen themselves and their forms are shadowed in the still waters.

We discovered that a pair of song sparrows had built just across the road from us in a tall spruce tree. Daddy climbed up and found a rather curious nest, considering its builder. A round nest as large as a turnip, compactly and beautifully built. Quite high up on one side was a small entrance. Daddy could just barely touch the eggs with the tips of his fingers. Is this not a strange nest for a song sparrow?

row? More fitting the description of an oven-bird. It was a song sparrow without doubt as we observed the birds through glasses all the Sunday afternoon as they came and went."

From another direction comes another interesting letter. Mr. Ludlow Jenkins of Marshfield tells of the remarkable fecundity of the Hungarian partridge. "I was shown this week by our next neighbor, Mr. Mill, a Hungarian partridge's nest with twenty-six eggs—quite a nestful and quite a small egg about the size of a pigeon's. Mr. McKay, a not far distant neighbor of our own, found a nest with twenty-seven eggs. It would be interesting to know if any have been found with more.

We had the pleasure, a few weeks ago, of seeing three white-crowned sparrows, the first I had ever seen; but of course they may be plentiful enough for all I've not seen them. They were seen for several days by other people near here.

Several of us saw and heard, yesterday and the day before, a cuckoo: quite a treat indeed to hear him. What a peculiar song they have. Who was it called the cuckoo "a wandering voice?" We have quite a company of Waxwing Cedar Birds in the orchard now. Once you hear their peculiar wheeze you can easily locate them. These are the first I have seen for several years, in fact I seem to think we have a larger variety of birds now than formerly.

An Indigo Bunting was seen here a few days ago. Its peculiar blue color attracted a lot of attention although I was not fortunate enough to see it myself."

The last paragraph is of particular interest inasmuch as there is no previous record of the Indigo Bunting here though Reed says it breeds north to New Brunswick. I have made a note of this "visitation," also of the Starlings at Hunter River.

It was William Wordsworth, a British poet, who wrote a poem "To the Cuckoo," commencing:  
O biline New-come! I have heard,  
I hear thee, and I rejoice.  
O Cuckoo! Shall I call thee Bird,  
Or but a wandering Voice?"

It is now time to give another instalment of

### OUR NATIVE BIRDS

Perching Birds (continued). 611. Purple Martin, "common" in 1916; not here now? 612. Cliff or Eaves Swallow. 613. Barn Swallow, fairly common still despite the attacks of the house sparrows. 614. Tree Swallow, common will readily take to birdhouses. 615. Bank Swallow, common. 616. Bohemian Waxwing, "seen winter 1915-16." 619. Cedar Waxwing, Cedar Bird, or Cherry Bird, "not uncommon" 1916. 621. Northern Shrike or Butcher Bird: in the winter of 1917 a dead Shrike was found at Mt. Herbert, after a thaw, and brought to me for identification. It was very emaciated and had evidently been unable to migrate southward at the right season. "A rare visitor." 622. Loggerhead Shrike: "rare" (MacSwain). 624. Red-eyed Vireo, no data. 627. Warbling Vireo, no data. 628. Yellow-throated Vireo, no data. 629. Blue-headed or Solitary Vireo, observed by Dwight. 631. White-eyed Vireo, "not uncommon" according to MacSwain.

### GRAVITATION AND ITS EFFECTS (2)

I have already said that the Italian astronomers have a theory that the moon affects the land in the same way as it does the sea, that is it pulls the earth a little out of its spherical (or almost spherical) shape. To prove or disprove their theory they have placed delicate apparatus in a cave outside Rome, (where it will be free from certain interferences), and are about to commence experiments estimated to take five years. This should prove mechanically whether our satellite is concerned in the production of earthquakes and similar phenomena.

In a sort of empiric fashion, aided by copious records made over a number of years, the writer has tabulated a series of effects in this connection which appear to be fairly regular. It would seem that major earthquakes are more liable to occur at full moon (when the sun and the moon are "pulling" against each other) than at new moon. That the liability is greatly increased if at this time the moon is in conjunction with a planet in the order (1) Mars, (2) Jupiter,

### Milking Machine Parts

Sterilization of milking machine parts may be satisfactorily effected by treatment with steam, hot water, or chemical solutions. The Dominion Bacteriologist in his investigations of milking machines found that while heat and chemical methods are both effective from a bacteriological point of view, the former has a more deleterious effect upon the rubber parts, necessitating more frequent replacement. This is particularly true of the steam and the hot water methods in which the tubes are allowed to remain immersed between the milkings. Consequently, the most satisfactory heat treatment from all standpoints was considered to be an immersion in water at 170 degrees F., for twenty minutes only, after which the parts were hung up to drain and dry.

(3) Saturn, or (4) Venus. And that the greater tremors occur in the winter months when the sun is nearer the earth and consequently his gravitational pull is greater.

Not every conjunction or opposition brings a major earthquake, but it helps to prepare for one. This may be illustrated by the strain upon a rope. In order to bring coal up from the mines steel ropes are employed. Day after day these ropes are subjected to a strain which varies within very small limits. At last the rope breaks although it has no heavier strain: because all the previous stresses had weakened the fibres, and perhaps a fatal accident occurs. So it is with the crust of the earth: the continued strains produce a state of instability which at last finds relief in an earthquake. Astronomers are beginning to say "an earthquake is due" in certain localities which have not had one for some time!

The records show, more particularly in the winter, a considerable fall of the barometer at the times mentioned. This is usually (though exceptions occur) the precursor of high winds, and often of snow or rain storms.

It is a singular circumstance, of which I can give no explanation, that three or four days after new moon, every month of last winter, the weather was notably stormy. There was a trace of this last October when we had the first dash of snow on the 31st, and on the same date a destructive tornado struck Alabama. Nov. 30th, an awful day's rain here, and great gale and flood tides on the Atlantic coast. Dec. 31st high wind and heavy rain all day here: severe earthquake in South Africa. Jan. 28th. First real storm of winter: much damage here to wires by snow and 50 m.p.h. gale, cars stopped; N. S. and U.S.A. coasts affected. Feb. 27. Very low barometer snowstorm and thaw: about this date a furious storm in Britain caused three deaths. March 28th. A stormy day, with heavy snowfall here: electrical storms and tornadoes in the southern U. S. A. take 33 lives between March 28 and 30, April 30. Tornado storms in U. S. A., 1000 homeless at Yazoo City, Miss.

There is a regularity of recurrence, at about the same date, and at the same phase of the moon, which seems significant.

### THRIFT OR SEA-PINK

This little plant is in full bloom in my garden just now and attracts a good deal of attention. When not in flower one would suppose it to be some kind of grass, for it grows in a close mat of linear leaves. A closer examination shows that the leaves are shorter, neater, and thicker than those of grass, and their hue is a deeper green. The scapes or flower-stalks may be from 3 to 12 inches high, and are surmounted by dense hemispherical heads of little funnel-shaped flowers set close together. Generally these heads are of a light pink color, but I have one or two roots with what might be called cerise flowers. From its nature the thrift is well adapted for an outside border to flower-beds, but as it increases (though somewhat slowly) from the root it is best to take it up, divide, and replant every three or four years.

This is a British wild plant, and is found on rocky and stony seashores, cliffs and lofty mountains, right up to the Shetland Islands. In the Highlands it is known to ascend to 3,800 feet. All this speaks it as a very hardy plant. The old sailors, on the coasts of Northumberland and Durham, when they retired from the sea, nearly always went in for flower gardens round their cottages, and one could almost wager that the outmost border would be of "thrift," often

## Grades For Vegetables Recommended By The Fruit Branch

(By G. E. McIntosh, Commissioner)

For the season of 1933-34, inspection will be made on the basis of the definitions provided when the following vegetables are offered for sale in carloads or mixed carloads as of No. 1 or No. 2 Grade.

**BEETS**  
No. 1 shall consist of beets of similar varietal characteristics which are firm but not woody or tough and which are practically free from dirt, cracks, secondary roots, and from damage caused from disease, insects or mechanical or other means.

In this grade the size shall be from 2 to 4 inches inclusive in their greatest transverse diameter.

In order to allow for variations incident to proper grading and handling, not more than 10% by weight of any lot may vary from the prescribed sizes and in addition not more than 10% by weight of any such lot may be below the remaining requirements of this grade but not to exceed one half of this tolerance shall be allowed for any one defect.

No. 2 shall consist of beets which do not meet the requirements of the No. 1 grade.

**CABBAGE**  
No. 1 shall consist of heads of cabbage which are of similar type, reasonably firm and well trimmed; not withered or burst; free from soft rot and seed stems, and free from damage caused by discoloration, freezing, disease, insects or mechanical or other means.

In order to allow for variations incident to proper grading and handling, not more than 10% by weight of any lot may be below the requirements of the grade but not more than 1/5 of this tolerance, or 2%, may be effected with decay.

No. 2 shall consist of heads of cabbage which do not meet the requirements of the foregoing grade.

**Definition of Terms**  
"Similar type" means that the lot may be of the pointed, flat, saucer or red type as the case may be.  
"Reasonably firm" means that heads yields slightly to pressure, but are not soft.  
"Well trimmed" means that all outer leaves injured by worm, disease or other means are removed and the stem not longer than 1/4 inch.

"Seed stems" means heads which have seed stalks showing or where the formation of the seed stalk is plainly indicated.  
"Free from damage" means that the heads shall not be injured to an extent readily apparent upon examination.

**Containers**  
Crates of the following inside dimensions are recommended as suitable for cabbage:

Width	Depth	Length
12 "	18 "	15 1/4 "
15 "	18 "	27 "
13 "	17 "	26 1/4 "
17 "	19 1/2 "	26 1/4 "

held in by rounded stones white-washed or painted white.  
The scientists have lavishly given no less than six different Latin names to our little plant; however, we shall do well to follow Linnaeus and call it *Statice Armeria*. It grows freely from seed, of which I generally save a quantity in the fall, and some seedmen list it. There is a Japanese form with a long stem (2 feet), but it is apt to be straggling and not so desirable as the British form.

### A PEST ON BALSAM FIR

Some three or four years ago there appeared at the base of some balsam firs ("Vars") a thin white scurf, extending in lines up the bark. Little notice was taken of it at the time, since it had the appearance of some kind of lichen, which is, as a rule, quite a harmless vegetable growth. However, the scurf slowly ascended the trunk and about the third year it had practically covered the tree. On examination it was found to be a woolly insect and at Ottawa it was identified as a species of *Dreyfusia*, a pest from Europe. Some of the trees that were first attacked are now dying; a great quantity of a resinous substance has run down their trunks. This promises to be a pest which will be hard to deal with, and readers will do a service to forestry in general if they will look out for it and report their observations.

### Pigs In Pasture

Pasture for pigs may undoubtedly be made good use of on the average farm. This method of feeding, however, has disadvantages, particularly with the active bacon hog, owing to the opportunity for excessive exercise from the standpoint of fast finishing and the liability of little pigs to stunting through sunburn and the combined effects of sunburn and dew. With plenty of skim-milk or buttermilk, both the experimental evidence and that of practical feeders would indicate that growing bacon hogs may be fed for market more economically indoors or in well shaded pens, supplied with racks for green feed, preferably in the form of alfalfa or clover. Racks are essential to the prevention of waste.—Dominion Animal Husbandman.

**CARROTS**  
No. 1 shall consist of carrots of similar varietal characteristics which are firm but not woody or tough and which are practically free from dirt, cracks, secondary roots, and from damage caused from disease, insects or mechanical or other means.

In this grade the size shall be from 1 1/4 to 2 1/2 inches inclusive in their greatest transverse diameter. In order to allow for variations incident to proper grading and handling, not more than 10% by weight of any lot may vary from the prescribed sizes and in addition not more than 10% by weight of any such lot may be below the remaining requirements of this grade, but not to exceed one half of this tolerance shall be allowed for any one defect.

No. 2 shall consist of carrots which do not meet the requirements of the No. 1 grade.

**CARROTS**  
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In order to allow for variations incident to proper grading and handling, not more than 10% by weight of any lot may vary from the prescribed sizes and in addition not more than 10% by weight of any such lot may be below the remaining requirements of this grade, but not to exceed one half of this tolerance shall be allowed for any one defect.

No. 2 shall consist of carrots which do not meet the requirements of the No. 1 grade.

**CAULIFLOWER**  
No. 1 shall consist of neatly trimmed compact heads of cauliflower which are not discolored, ricey, fuzzy or overmature; which are free from damage caused by dirt or other foreign matter, bruises, insects, disease, mechanical or other means. Attached leaves shall be fresh and green.

No. 2 shall consist of heads of cauliflower which are free from serious damage caused by overmaturity, discoloration, dirt, or other foreign matter, bruises, disease, insects or mechanical or other means.

In order to allow for variations incident to proper grading and handling in each of the above grades, not more than 10% of any lot by count may be below the requirements of the grade, but not to exceed one half of this tolerance.

No. 3 shall consist of heads of cauliflower which do not meet the requirements of the foregoing grades.

**Definition of Terms**  
"Compact" means that the flower clusters are closely united and the heads feel solid.  
"Discoloration" means that the head is of some abnormal color.  
"Ricey" means that the stems of the flower clusters have started to elongate, causing the clusters to separate and give the head a loose or open and sometimes a granular appearance.

"Overmature" means a stage of growth which is beyond that of a compact, properly developed head. An overmature head usually is loose, ricey, or fuzzy.  
"Free from damage" means that the head is not injured to an extent readily apparent upon examination.

**Containers**  
Crates of the following inside dimensions are recommended as suitable for cauliflower:

Depth	Width	Length
7 1/2 "	18 "	22 "
8 1/4 "	18 "	22 "
13 "	15 "	22 "
20 "	10 "	22 "

**Slicing Cucumbers**  
Fancy No. 1 shall consist of cucumbers which are fresh, firm, well shaped, well developed and have a green colour over two-thirds or more of the surface, and are free from damage caused by freezing, mosaic or other disease, insects or mechanical or other means, and shall not be less than medium size for the variety.

In this grade, "medium size" shall mean from 6 to 10 inches in length. No. 1 shall consist of cucumbers which may be slightly misshapen but are fresh, firm, well developed and free from damage caused by freezing, mosaic or other disease.

**HEAD LETTUCE**  
No. 1 shall consist of heads of lettuce of similar varietal characteristics, fairly uniform in size, fresh and firm, which are not split or burst, and which are free from decay, tip-burn, seed stems, russet, brown blight, doubles, and from damage caused by broken mid-ribs, freezing, dirt, sunburn, discoloration, disease, aphid or other insects, or mechanical or other means. Each head shall be reasonably well trimmed.

No. 2 shall consist of heads of lettuce of similar varietal characteristics, fresh, which are not split or burst and which are free from decay, tip-burn, seed stems, russet, brown blight, doubles, and from serious damage caused by broken mid-ribs, freezing, dirt, sunburn, discoloration, disease, aphid or other insects, or mechanical or other means. Each head shall be reasonably well trimmed. Not less than 75% of heads of Iceberg type lettuce shall be firm and the rest shall be fairly firm, and heads of Big Boston type shall be fairly firm.

In order to allow for variations incident to proper grading and handling, not more than 10% by count of any lot may be below the requirements of the above grades but not more than one-half of this tolerance, or 5%, shall be allowed for decay affecting the compact portion of the head. Of the tolerance for decay, not more than two-fifths, or 2%, shall be allowed for silny decay.

**Definition of Terms**  
"Similar varietal characteristics" means that the heads in any container have the same characteristic leaf growth. For example, lettuce of the Iceberg and Big Boston types must not be mixed.  
"Fresh" means that the head is crisp, although the wrapper leaves may be slightly wilted.

## Eel-Grass Shortage Grows Worse

The shortage of eel-grass on the Atlantic coast of Canada and the United States is growing worse and is affecting an increased area. There is now practically no eel-grass left in the Magdalen Islands, while the destruction of eel-grass along the coast of the mainland is known to extend north at least as far as Gaspe.

There have been some reports during the past winter that the eel-grass was "coming back" in certain areas, but recent investigations by officials of the Canadian National Parks Branch of the Department of the Interior show that such reports furnish no valid grounds for optimism. During 1932 fairly extensive new growths of young eel-grass plants did appear in some places, particularly in southwestern Nova Scotia, but when these attained a height of six inches or so they appeared to be attacked in their turn by the disease that had killed the mature plants a year or two before. Some of these areas of young growth have been entirely destroyed already and others are dying. As these young plants die without having produced any seed, the time must come when all the old seed in the mud of the bottom will have been exhausted and new growth will cease to appear at all.

What is probably the same disease has destroyed much eel-grass on the coasts of England, Holland and France. French scientists who

"Firm" as applied to heads of Iceberg type lettuce means that the head is compact and yields only slightly to pressure; as applied to heads of Big Boston type lettuce, means that the head is fairly compact.

"Burst" means that the head is broken open.

"Free from seed stems" means heads in which seed stems are not showing, or in which the formation of seed stems is not distinctly indicated.

"Doubles" means two heads on the same stem.

"Damage" means any injury which materially affects the appearance or the edible or the shipping quality of the product.

"Reasonably well trimmed" means that the butt is trimmed off close to the point of attachment of the outer leaves, that the coarse outer leaves have been removed, and that heads of Iceberg type do not have more than twelve wrapper leaves.

"Wrapper leaves" means all leaves which do not closely enfold the compact portion of the head.

"Fairly firm" means that although the head is not firm, it is not soft or spongy.

"Free from serious damage" means free from any injury which causes loss of a portion of the edible part of the head.

have studied it have announced that they have discovered the bacteria that cause the disease. Their theory is that these bacteria are present in the sea-water, but enter the eel-grass plant only through a wound. If this is correct, it explains why sound young eel-grass plants grow well up to the size where the tips of their leaves begin to become somewhat frayed, but die rapidly after such fraying, which admits the bacteria to the tissues, has begun.

No evidence of any real return of the eel-grass to normal conditions has been discovered. Existing conditions relating to this plant are believed to be unprecedented.

Canada Geese and Brant, which are accustomed to depend largely upon eel-grass for food along the eastern coasts of Canada and the United States, did not suffer last winter from the shortage of this plant as much as it had been feared they would, because the winter was unusually mild and therefore practically none of the remaining food supply was made inaccessible by ice and snow. A few Geese in eastern Nova Scotia died, probably from starvation, and several flocks of Geese in the Maritime Provinces had to be assisted by artificial feeding.

Reports from the Department of the Interior's observers in the Maritime Provinces this spring show, however, a marked reduction in the numbers of northward flying Canada Geese and Brant. This diminution was so severe in one county in Prince Edward Island that only 8 per cent of the normal spring numbers of these birds was present. Those Geese and Brant that were seen were generally restless and seemed to have difficulty in finding enough food. They were reported to be eating sea lettuce, sago pondweed, the roots of marsh grasses, and upland grasses, and possibly snails and small fish as substitutes for eel-grass. Three different observers reported that Brant which seldom feed elsewhere than on salt water, were seen feeding in upland fields for the first time in the experience of these men.

The Department of the Interior, through its regular officers and its corps of enthusiastic and experienced voluntary observers in the Maritime Provinces, is continuing to observe and investigate the eel-grass shortage and its effect on Canada Geese and Brant, which, in the coastal areas affected, are undoubtedly facing a very serious situation.

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