

FARMERS, STOCK BREEDERS AND GARDENERS

Jack Miner And The Birds

By Jack Miner Himself—A History of This Notable Bird Lover's Life

CHAPTER V BOB WHITE QUAIL

Now as I had grown from boyhood to man and had become the father in a little "home, sweet home," my responsibilities naturally caused me to take life a little more seriously. But, as a boy loves to go bare-foot and play marbles in the spring of the year, when fall came my whole body and soul seemed to reach out for just one sup to pure, unadulterated nature, and many a morning, after I have been over to the factory and built a fire under the boiler, I have taken a stroll by twilight, before breakfast, and stepped up into a fence corner, leaned against the old rails and stood and breathed the pure air of a new-born day. Possibly the swishing-sh-sh of a flock of small wild ducks might be heard overhead as they darted their way southward; the note of the wood-thrush might also be noticed, and the flutter of the deer old woodcock's wings have sometimes almost caused me to flinch. Then is the last stars were closing their eyes for the day and the white frost of the early-October morning became visible on the top rail, away to the east would come the faint call of the quail. That voice would hardly die out before the father of another family would start calling the roll, right in the next field; then one to the south; another very near the woods, to the north; and again to the west would come these cheerful notes; until the frosty air would fairly ring all around me, with the melody of Bob White's roll call, the head of the family calling and each member answering. And if all is well, and none is missing, in about three minutes all is still and one would not know there was a quail in the country, unless a hawk happened to dart among them; then a shrill alarm is given, and all buzz for cover.

Now it is said that there never was a tribe of heathen discovered that did not worship some kind of god. But I will say this: That no intelligent man can live in this great, out-of-doors and study the creatures that occupy it before man has any control over them, combined with the regularity of the sun, moon and whispering stars, without being compelled to believe that there is an over-ruling Power. And although I had not read a word on the value of our quail, this thought often presented itself to me: "What did God put them here for?" Yes, I can recall time, and time again, when, after I had emptied the quail out of my hunting-coat pocket, I have gone to the kitchen door and thrown out by the handful of the weed-seed that had worked out of their bearded crops; and how often in the summer, I have seen them picking insects, as they strutted by my hiding place! No, I am proud to say, I have not shot a quail in nearly twenty years, and I am still prouder to say that I have this much confidence in humanity, that today there wouldn't be one quail shot where there are five, if these shooters would first consider their cheerfulness, beauty and value while alive. For one Bob White sitting on the top rail, sounding his beautiful note, brings more gladness and more cheer to more people than twenty-five will in a bloody game-sack.

Now about the only argument the quail shooter has to put up is that the wire fence has taken the place of the old rail and wakened fence row and has destroyed their cover, and that if he didn't shoot them, the quail would only fight, one among the others, and would not nest. I am not here to say that this man has no brains, but I will say that the fishing of his trigger-finger to shoot something has got control of his brains; and when I hear him blowing off this stuff I take father's advice, and "drop it." For the positive fact is that the old fence row is, and always was, the worst death-trap that quail ever took shelter in. The height of a sportsman's ambition is to see them alive there; and the prowling house-cat has a great advantage there; and when March comes, that is just the place to look for a bunch of dead quail—quail that sought shelter there during the winter months, were drifted under, and died. All thinking men will admit that when quail are in real need of shelter, this old fence row is nothing but a fence drift. The only drawback quail have in Western Ontario, and in Ohio, as well, is the disappearing of the woods that sheltered them from

the drifting snows. Not that he gets any of his living there, but just flies there for shelter during the severe storms of winter.

As to them becoming so numerous as to quarrel and not breed, quail do not nest or breed in the woods. When we came to Canada in 1878 there were twenty-five where there hasn't been one during the last ten years. I am sure I have seen one hundred and fifty quail on an ordinary farm; and this change is not because the wire fence has taken the place of the rail, etc. All these excuses are false and without foundation.

Now here is the positive fact: The great mistake the sportsmen have made is that they have directed all their attention on the death-dealing weapons, as to how to destroy the quail. The breech-loader has taken the place of the old muzzle-loader; the six-shot pump gun has taken the place of the double-barrelled breech loaders; the quick nitro-explosives have taken the place of the slow black powder; and thus we have gone on and on for the last thirty-five years, to my personal knowledge, thoughtless and ignorant of what we were doing, not taking into consideration at all the increasing number of shooters, year by year, until at last we have waked up to find that our birds have decreased over ninety per cent. during that time.

Has the wire fence destroyed the ducks, the beautiful trumpeter swans, our mourning doves, the woodcocks and meadow-larks? These migratory birds have decreased the same as our Ontario quail have, and God-given intelligence, wrongly directed, is responsible for it all.

Now just picture North America if, during the last thirty-five years, we had paid as much attention to the protection and increase of our birds as we have to these death-dealing weapons. What a cheerful difference it certainly would have made!

About ten years ago I started to protect the quail in earnest. I made eight feed-racks.

The boxes are eight inches square and four inches deep. The cover is about three feet wide and almost one foot from the feed. If a little snow does drift in, it is very light and the birds will scratch and get the feed, as no sleet or rain can reach it.

The quail soon found the food and I was agreeably surprised to see the number of tracks around these racks the first time I went to visit them; but when I returned three or four days later there was scarcely a quail to be seen. On investigation I found that the hawks had apparently struck the Klondyke of their lives, and it was almost sure death to Bob to go near the feed, as Mr. Hawk was always watching.

Then I bought a few No. 1 jump traps and set three poles, fifteen or twenty feet long and from four to five inches through at the butt. I then drove three or four small nails in the butt-end of each pole, to stay the trap and keep it from blowing off, but leaving it free enough so that when it caught its victim he could fly up and raise the trap off the top of the pole. A small brush-clog was fastened to the end of the chain and a nail was driven in the side of the pole about a foot from the trap, to hang the clog on. About six or eight small staples were driven in around the pole, near the trap, to put fragments of weed and grass in so as to disguise the trap, making it appear like an old sparrow's nest. Then I stood the pole, with the butt up, beside another small tree so that the boughs of the tree would project a foot or so above the trap; then wired the pole to the tree. When a hawk or owl gets his toe in such a trap there is nothing solid for him to jerk against, but he can fly down with the trap and clog, and isn't apt to jerk out. Moreover, when hawk number two comes along number one is not up there, flapping, to scare him and make him shy of this pole. I have known them time and again, to alight on the same pole and then fly down and kill and eat the hawk below who was flapping around with the trap and clog.

As proof that birds visit the same places, I will say that I haven't caught over fifteen hawks and owls down there in any one winter, in those three traps since.

(Continued on Page 12)

Prevention Of Mechanical Injuries To Potato Tubers

(Experimental Farms Note.)

For some years farmers in the potato growing sections of Canada have been reminded of the necessity of preventing mechanical injuries to potatoes whether grown for seed purposes or for table use.

The most common mechanical injuries are cuts, cracks, skinning and bruises. Cuts are most noticeable but bruises are considered of greater importance because what may appear to be a minor bruise is actually an area of crushed tissue giving rise to many internal cracks the forerunners of storage rots resulting from mechanical injuries and responsible for appreciable losses. Of the agencies causing such injuries the potato digger is the chief offender. The potatoes may also be damaged as they are picked up and hauled to the cellar. It has been determined experimentally that tubers are injured but very slightly when poured from a height of 30 inches, however, injury by cracking and bruising is very severe. As a further precaution against such injury the newly dug potatoes should be left exposed to the air for at least 30 minutes. Furthermore, the potatoes should be reasonably mature as tubers crack very easily if they are still growing rapidly at digging time. By avoiding late planting this source of injury may be materially reduced.

Since most of the injuries are caused by the digger it should be selected with care and adjusted to insure the least possible damage to the crop. According to authorities on the subject diggers should be at least 24 inches in width and operated deep enough to dig the potatoes without cutting. Sufficient dirt should be elevated over the chain to cushion the potatoes and the rear should be adjusted just high enough to free the potatoes from the soil but not too high lest bruising occurs. It is usually necessary to pad the digger chain, especially if the potatoes are immature. If the soil is damp it may stick to the rods and offer suitable protection. When the soil is so dry that it sifts through the chain or belt other measures must be taken and for this it is preferable to split pieces of rubber hose and tie them around the rods. Similarly it is highly important to pad all hard and solid parts of the digger with which potatoes may come in contact. Any additional information may be obtained by writing to your nearest Dominion Laboratory of Plant Pathology—R. E. Hurst, Dominion Laboratory of Plant Pathology, Charlottetown, P. E. I.

During the past few years on the stations it has been the practice to add three pounds of alfalfa to the grass mixture. While only a few satisfactory stands have as yet been secured, it may be said to be gradually establishing itself. At each and every station the growth of alfalfa has been noticeably superior on the areas which received an application of ground limestone in recent years.—R. C. Parent, Dominion Experimental Station, Charlottetown, P. E. I.

The quail soon found the food and I was agreeably surprised to see the number of tracks around these racks the first time I went to visit them; but when I returned three or four days later there was scarcely a quail to be seen. On investigation I found that the hawks had apparently struck the Klondyke of their lives, and it was almost sure death to Bob to go near the feed, as Mr. Hawk was always watching.

Flax Growing Countries

Canada and the Irish Free State are the only Empire countries other than the United Kingdom producing flax in any appreciable quantity. The production of the United Kingdom comes mainly from the United Kingdom acreage in Northern Ireland, and, in reference to this it is interesting to note that seed has been grown for the Department of Agriculture of Northern Ireland by the Fibre Division of the Dominion Experimental Farms at Ste Anne de la Pocatiere, in the province of Quebec. In Russia and Poland and in the neighboring countries, a considerable quantity of flax is grown primarily for the seed, from which the oil is extracted and used in cooking or as a substitute for other edible fats. Only a poorer grade of flax fibre is obtainable under such conditions, but where purchasing power and standards of living are low, retting is nevertheless carried out.

In addition, however, the dolginez variety, which is grown chiefly for the fibre, is cultivated upon a large scale in Russia. However, the best flax is obtained where fibre is made the primary object, says the Empire Marketing Board, and where water containing certain special qualities is available for retting, as in Northern Ireland, Belgium and France. The difference between the two types of production is demonstrated in the fact that upon the figures available, Russia's yield averages 1 1/2 cwt. per acre against as much as 8 cwt. in France and Belgium. According to the figures for 1931, the world area under flax was 6,948,000 acres.

to output was given when lobster was taken, but both haddock and cod had more effect than mackerel.

"After cod and haddock there was a much larger volume of juice secreted in the first hour than in the second hour. After lobster and mackerel the volume of secretion was less in the first hour than in the second hour, that of lobster being only slightly less but that of mackerel being decidedly reduced."

The Value Of Ground Limestone

(Experimental Farms Note.)

In the economical management of any farm in the Maritime Provinces, the production of large quantities of legumes, such as red clover, is of prime importance. In securing a stand of this valuable crop there are many controlling factors which play an important part, such as soil fertility, abundance of manure and organic matter, hardy and fresh seed and freedom from weeds. The limiting factor, however, in perhaps the majority of cases is lime in one of its forms. Where mussel mud is near at hand, satisfactory results are obtained from its use, but in localities where mussel mud is not easily obtained, ground limestone is to be preferred. It is cheap, effective, easy to apply and may be sown at any time of the year.

On Prince Edward Island Illustration Stations, especially Iona, Wood Islands, Montague, Red Point and Rose Valley, it has been found that an application of ground limestone was absolutely necessary in order to secure a satisfactory stand of red clover. The soil at the above-mentioned stations is distinctly acid. At the first three it is light and sandy, while at Red Point and Rose Valley it is a clay loam. At these latter two stations the physical condition of the soil was noticeably improved.

Remarkable increases in yields of clover have been obtained from the use of limestone. In 1932 from nine stations the yield of clover without limestone was 0.88 of a ton, while with limestone it was 1.35 tons, or an increase of 53 per cent. At Montague the unlimed plot yielded 0.98 of a ton, while the limed plot yielded 2.25 tons, an increase of 137 per cent. At four stations in 1931 the yield of clover without limestone was 0.90 of a ton, and with limestone it was 1.64 tons per acre, or in other words an increase due to the limestone of 173 per cent. Needless to say the quality of the clover on the limed areas was much superior to that on the untreated areas.

During the past few years on the stations it has been the practice to add three pounds of alfalfa to the grass mixture. While only a few satisfactory stands have as yet been secured, it may be said to be gradually establishing itself. At each and every station the growth of alfalfa has been noticeably superior on the areas which received an application of ground limestone in recent years.—R. C. Parent, Dominion Experimental Station, Charlottetown, P. E. I.

Nature's Potassic Fertilizer

The ashes of wood have long been recognized as a fertilizer of very considerable value, indeed their use in agriculture is historic, says the Dominion Chemist. In all countries practising agriculture, including Canada, they have been highly prized, especially for clover, grapes and fruit trees and leafy crops generally on sandy and light loams. It was only through the advent of high-grade potash salts that their use fell off, though, of course, the production of ashes in decreasing quantities of late years, owing to the disappearance of our forests, has been an important factor in making it more and more difficult for the farmer in the older settled districts to obtain them.

They are essentially a potassic fertilizer. Ashes of good quality, that is, dry, unbleached and unbleached, contain between 4 per cent and 6 1-2 per cent potash, the average potash content being about 5 1-2 per cent. This potash is in a soluble form and hence immediately available for crop use. Moreover, the potash exists in these ashes in a condition (the carbonate) much more favourable for the nutrition of plants than in more commonly used compounds and should be worth at least 1 cent per pound more than in the latter. In fact, there is no better potassic fertilizer.

In addition to their potash, wood ashes contain some 2 per cent phosphoric acid and from 20 to 30 per cent carbonate of lime. This enhances their fertilizer value and makes them in a sense an all-round fertilizer for supplying the mineral elements required by crops. Further, wood ashes correct acidity, a condition detrimental to the thrift of most farm crops. Muric acid and sulphate of potash are of no value for neutralizing acidity.

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Selecting The Laying Stock

(Experimental Farms Note.)

It is advisable to start selecting the laying stock just as soon as possible after the pullets are fully feathered out. First of all, select all pullets from your best matings. That is, the pullets selected for laying stock should be from dams that have laid at least 175 eggs averaging 24 ounces per dozen and better still, from dams having 200 eggs to their credit sired by a cockerel whose dam has laid 200 eggs per year with an average of 24 ounces per dozen.

There are three types of pullets usually found in the flock. The first is the clean-cut, deep-bodied, closely-feathered, angular bird that is always alert. The second is the round-bodied, loose-feathered, sluggish bird that fattens readily and very seldom proves to be a profitable egg producer. Then one will generally find a few that are perhaps a combination of the two types just mentioned.

It is well, then, to select the layers from the first type or group, put them on a range by themselves and perhaps go over them once or twice again before they are put into their winter quarters. It is extremely advisable in the interest of economic production to satisfy yourself that you are not retaining in the laying flock pullets that do not conform fairly closely to the first type previously described. Experience has taught us that the individual that conforms to the egg producing type is one with a deep body, as measured from the front of the breast-bone to the centre of the back; a deep gradually tapering flat side, carrying its width well out to the base of the tail. The keel or breast bone should be large and parallel with the back. A good full breast and plenty of width at the pelvis are desirable. Do not overlook the head as it is an excellent index of quality. The head should be clean-cut, medium in length, deep, wide and more or less flat, the width increasing uniformly from beak to a point directly behind the eye. The eye should be large, bright and prominent. A smooth, clear, lean skin over the face is desirable.

The matter of selection is made easier when the birds are of uniform size. Therefore, it is good practice to try to have all hatches come off within as short a period as possible. At the Experimental Farm, Nappan, it has been found that from April 1st to 15th makes a very suitable period.

Use only good sires, preferably pedigree birds and select carefully the laying stock and you will find that the poultry flock is one of your most profitable sources of farm revenue.

Grazing Is Not All Honey

One of the most effective methods of protection of the softer tissues of plants against grazing animals is that in which some part of the plant takes the form of a sharp thorn which pierces the skin of an animal coming into contact with it. The particular part of the plant forming the thorn varies in different species. In the juniper it is the tip of the leaf, while in the thistle it is the margin of the leaf. In the rose, stout prickles occur on the stem, whereas in the hawthorn the long thorns probably represent a modified shoot. In some species such as roses, the prickles doubtless have a second function, enabling the plant to climb by scrambling over the surface of other vegetation.

In Canada, there are two genera of stinging plants, namely nettles and wood nettles. There are five Canadian species of nettles. Two of them are widely distributed and three are Western. The habitat of the wood nettles is Eastern Canada. Other protective devices in plants are bitter tastes (genetic, toothwort, water pepper) and disagreeable odour (skunk cabbage, skunk currant, skunk bush and the onion). It is probable that the aromatic taste of some plants, such as wormwood, tansy, musk, holy grass, fragrant sumac, etc. protects them against grazing animals, and several plants are poisonous—Dominion Department of Agriculture.

Spinning and Weaving

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WM. LANDRIGAN,
65 Queen Street, Charlottetown.

Honey Producers Duty to The Consumer

(Experimental Farms Note.)

In the case of a food product the producer owes to the consumer extreme care in preparation of that product for the market to see that it is wholesome, clean, attractively packed and equal to the standards under which it is advertised and labelled. The honey producer had things very much his own way until a few years ago because demand exceeded supply and honey sold quite readily without too much fussing around with it. To-day, however, conditions are somewhat different. More honey is being produced, competition has become keener and the consuming public has become more discriminating in its choice. The consumer has been educated to buy goods graded to definite and uniform standards and is demanding similar standards for honey and these demands cannot be ignored. The consumer is willing to pay for quality produce and as he has the final say as to what he shall buy, his wants must be considered. The producer who fails to recognize this fact might just as well change his profession first as last.

The Cold Frame

Autumn is the best time for the amateur gardener to erect a cold frame. A cold frame is much like a hothed in appearance, but is without manure. It is used in the spring either for seeds or for growing plants taken from the hothed before they can be set out in the open, or it may also be used by flower lovers who start plants in the house and who cannot get or do not desire to use manure.

According to the directions of the circular of the Dominion Department of Agriculture on how to make and use hotheds and cold frames the frame should be made with sides and ends of twelve-inch boards, preferably two inches in thickness and placed on a slope so that the back part of the frame is six inches higher than the front. By getting the gold frame ready before the winter sets in, considerable time will be saved in the early spring when it would be impossible to erect the frame owing to the frost in the ground.—Issued by Information Service Publications Branch Dept. of Agriculture, Ottawa, Ont.

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NEWSY NOTES

BY AGRICOLA

A NEW WEED

In the July number of "Scientific Agriculture" Professor Herbert Groh, of Ottawa, tells of a new weed which is recorded in Canada and the United States; and as one of its localities is Charlottetown, it is quite of interest to agriculturists here. Professor Groh, it will be remembered, carried out an extensive Weed Survey on the Island in July 1928, details of which appeared in the magazine above named; and it was during this survey that the Dog Mustard, *Erucastrum gallicum* (Willd.) O. E. Schulz, was first found in our Province. It had been found as early as 1922 in Manitoba, and has since then been found at points ranging from Charlottetown to Scott, Sask., thus covering more than 2500 miles. "In 1911 Dr. B. L. Robinson published the first American records; one dating back to 1903 from Wisconsin." (Scientific Agriculture).

The earliest finds of this plant were dubiously referred to the genus *Diplotaxis* or to *Sisymbrium*, but as it began to be met with over such a great extent of territory, it was deemed worthy of special study which showed that this plant could not be referred to either of these genera. Eventually last year, the Gray Herbarium of Harvard University identified it as the European *Erucastrum* aforesaid. It is not mentioned in the Manuals of American plants (Gray's and Britton's) but the student will find an excellent description in Professor Groh's interesting article. Two sites are given where fields were heavily infested, but these were in Western Canada.

THE WIDE WEST (4)

Our traveller, as was stated in our last instalment, wintered in the cities, and proceeds to give his impressions of the season. We must recollect that he writes of sixty years ago and that while men and places may change greatly in such a space, nature does not. Canadians (he says) do not dread the winter, but on the contrary long for the snowfall. But it must fall at the right time. If it comes before the ground is sufficiently indurated by frost, or the lakes and rivers have acquired a "sufficient crust" of ice, then it acts as a warm covering, the ice ceases to increase in thickness, and is treacherous during the whole winter. On the other hand, great is the rejoicing when no snow falls till the earth is hard as iron and the ice is able to bear the skater or the sleigh.

The sudden falling or the temperature at once banishes the languor of the summer heat, and produces a wonderful exhilaration of spirits: "men and animals seem intoxicated with the new and bracing conditions of the atmosphere." The small Normandy horses prance with delight and can hardly be reined in, and the Newfoundland dogs roll in ecstasy in the snow. If our author was from the South of England—and very many of our pioneers were—such incidents would have the attraction of complete novelty.

He notes that the difference between the temperature of the room and that of the external atmosphere is at times 100 degrees; so that the most favorable conditions are afforded for the development of electricity. "A Canadian feat, which at first looks like a traveller's story, viz., the lighting of gas by merely pointing a finger to the burner, is accounted for by the

At that time the Grand Trunk railway ran along the whole length of the St. Lawrence, and Lake Ontario, and was both slow and safe, and its safety was due to its slowness. When the speed was only fifteen or twenty miles an hour, a collision did comparatively little injury. "The danger on English railways arises from the demand of the people for speed."

In late autumn and early winter we enjoy gorgeous sunsets, and accordingly our author observes that "in the sunsets of Canada there is a tint which is never seen in England. It is a deep apple green. It is seen in its greatest intensity only in the Lower St. Lawrence," and that tint often glories the sky in our own province. In northern England I look back to winter sunsets, when the cottage windows blazed under the level rays and the scene was tinged with

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