

FOR FARMERS, STOCK BREEDERS AND GARDENERS

Jack Miner And The Birds

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

CHAPTER III. MARKET HUNTING

As quail and grouse were so very plentiful and good warm clothes were scarce, the second fall we were here my brother and I started to hunt for the market. This caused us to study the nature of game. I soon found myself practicing the call of B-b White. I would call early in the morning, when the country was silent, and listen to the echo come back from the woods, until I could call Bob right up to me from as far as he could hear the faintest sound of my imitative note. Yes, many a time during the nesting season have I called five or six male birds up near where I was sitting, then see them have a scrap. I tell you they were gummy little fellows. And what fun it was to be back in the field, hid in a bunch of goldenrod, with my old slouch hat tucked in my pants pocket, allowing my long hair and freckles to blend with the surroundings, and watch these plump little beauties come together in battle, sometimes striking each other so hard they would go fully six feet in the air and come down facing each other. I have had them so close I could almost feel the breath of their wings; and possibly three or four rods away was another one, picking the earth sideways, apparently challenging the fourth who was sitting on a stump as if it were re-foresting.

I tell you, life in the country was so sweet to me I would have agreed to stay here longer than it would take a raft of detectives to find my great-grandmother's pewter spoon. But the grouse was a hard fellow to call. This, however, did not prevent our success; for as soon as we got one we would examine its crop and find out just what it was feeding on; if it contained buds, then what kind they were, etc. And you could rest assured that ninety per cent. of the grouse in that country were feeding on this same variety of food. Then as we would walk through the woods with the dogs at our heels and our faces as nearly on the tops of our heads as possible, the grouse became very easy. I have shot five out of the

CHAPTER IV. OUR FAITHFUL DOGS

While I would not advise any person to keep a dog unless he needs one, yet one of the most faithful animal friends man can have is an educated dog. Our two bird-dogs were full brothers, and though my brother and I knew all things together, yet the dogs knew us apart. If I went to the barn alone, my dog would follow me; yet if we boys walked to the road together, both dogs would follow us and would not come farther unless they were invited. If we threw our coats down, each dog would lie on or near his master's coat.

I never knew Set ("S") was my dog's name) to disobey orders but once; that was when he was about eighteen months old. Brother and I had started from home before daylight to walk about eight miles, to hunt for deer. When daylight came we were about five miles on our way, and I looked around and here was Set following. I at once gave him a right good scolding, and told him to start for home, but he hesitated. That minute, a snarl of "just dogs" came yelping out from a settler's buildings, and Set took leg bail for home with this bunch pow-wow-ing in pursuit. Just then brother looked at his watch and it was fifteen minutes past seven. When we arrived home at night my first question was "What time did Set get home?" Mother looked over her glasses and said, "He got here just seven o'clock." Now I knew he was going some by his actions, but just where he gained the fifteen minutes still remains a mystery.

On one occasion three sportsmen came and wanted a hunt, but I could not go; so I introduced Set to them, and as they had guns he eventually consented to go along. In about an hour he pointed a large bevy of quail in a weed field. The three sportsmen lined up and pressed forward, and as the birds buzzed up in front of them, banter-ban! went six shots, right out in the open. And not a bird was touched. Dear old Set looked around in disgust, turned, and came straight home.

Well, it wasn't long before our faithful dogs were getting a year older every twelve months, but still they clung to us, though life had become a burden. Dear mother, unknown to us, got a man to chloroform them. When he started

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to dig their graves we caught on, and both of us, men, stopped work and made a box and laid our faithful friends—friends who had never deceived us—side by side in one coffin and buried them under a shade tree on the old homestead. As we pushed the earth on the box I felt ashamed to look up at my brother, but when I did I found there were tears in his eyes, too.

(To Be Continued)

Alfalfa As A Silage Crop

As alfalfa is superior for hay production to all other commonly grown hay crops it should generally be used for hay rather than for silage. Besides, it appears to be more difficult to make alfalfa into good silage than other legume crops, and is therefore seldom used as a silage crop. Some advance has been made, however, by the Dominion Division of Field Husbandry in finding out methods of handling this crop in the form of silage which will result in the production of a palatable winter feed. Alfalfa has been cut and ensiled when it was one-tenth in bloom and when it was in full bloom, without wilting, and after several hours of wilting.

In all the experiments where pure alfalfa was ensiled immediately after cutting, the resulting silage was of poor quality. The larger the amount of moisture the crop contained, the more undesirable was the silage. This very moist silage did not turn mouldy but it became rancid and developed an acid odour which apparently was almost as disagreeable to the dairy cows as to human beings. In one trial where the alfalfa was ensiled while still wet from rain, the silage was of a particularly poor quality. Cutting alfalfa when it had reached full bloom and allowed to wilt in the swath in the field for five hours in the sun, or for longer if the sun was not shining, resulted in the production of silage which was eaten with relish by the cattle.—Crop Rotations Bulletin, Dominion Department of Agriculture.

THE GROWTH OF POPULATION

Australia's population showed a net estimated increase of 14,860 during the first quarter of this year, after allowing for a loss of 577 by migration. Of this increase Victoria absorbed 6393. The Australian net increase for the year ending March 31 was 50,343, of which Victoria's share was 12,446. The total population of the Commonwealth is now estimated at 6,600,000. That of Victoria is 1,817,030. Females exceeded males by 1065 in the quarterly increase.

In the 12 years since the 1921 census, the actual increase of Australia's population was 1,163,881 persons, of whom 77 per cent, were excess of births over deaths, or natural increase, and the balance gain by immigration. The average rate of increase for the period was 1.62 per cent.

NATURE'S NITROGEN STORE

Humus, the vegetable matter in soil in the form of the semi-decomposed remains of past generations of plant life, is nature's storehouse for nitrogen. As the humus in a soil is increased or decreased, so is the nitrogen increased or decreased. Humus performs the useful purpose of so favourably affecting the physical condition of both clays and sands that it renders them suitable for the support of crops. It furnishes the material upon which the micro-organisms of the soil feed, thus fostering a valuable agency in the preparation of plant food.

NEWSY NOTES

BY AGRICOLA

PLANTS FROM "C.M."

I have received a small collection of wild plants for naming from "C.M. Kings Co." and find them rather interesting. No. 1 is the little Eyebright, whose generic name is Euphrasia. Sir J. D. Hooker, in his "British Flora," states that the common Euphrasia officinalis is circumpolar in range (by which he means that it is found in the temperate regions of Europe, Asia and America) and MacSwain in his list of Island plants, uses Hooker's name for it. However, American systematists have re-classified the plant so that there are now six American species according to Asa Gray—most of them with trivial distinctions. Our plant, then, is now known as Euphrasia Americana Wettstein.

The Eyebright formerly had a reputation as a medicinal herb; it was supposed to promote cheerfulness which is the meaning of its Latin name, and perhaps accounts for its English name too. On the other hand it belongs to a group of plants who may in modern slang be termed "a bad lot." They are sneak-thieves, who attack their roots to the roots of other plants and divert the sap to their own uses! The farmers of bygone days saw that the grass did not thrive where these plants grew, and explained that the Eyebright burnt "the roots of the grass!" We have four of these root parasites closely allied, in our Island flora: the Cow-wheat, the Eyebright, the Red Bartsia, and the Yellow rattle.

No. 2 is a species of Oenothera or Evening Primrose, but the specimen is too small and fragmentary to permit of greater definiteness. It is possibly one of the smaller kinds called "Sandrops."

No. 3 is the Withe-Rod or Wild Raisin, Viburnum Cassinoides L., a shrub of the swamps and moist places. As "C.M." may remember, the plant which she sent for identification in 1930 was Viburnum Opulus L. the High Bush Cranberry, a rather close relative of our Withe-Rod, but a European importation. These two Viburnums differ in several respects, but agree in having a one-celled, one seeded drupe with a flat stone. The withe-rod has pointed oval leaves, and black "berries" in bunches.

No. 4 is the Red-oreed Dogwood, Cornus stolonifera Michx. This is another shrub of the moist places. The young oser-like shoots of the current season are bright red-purple, and the leaves are ovate and whitish underneath. The "berry" which is really a drupe, contains one or two seeds (stones) and is usually white, though it may be lead-color, or rarely, blue. In old days the Indians used to scrape and dry the inner bark of the dogwood for smoking. They called it "Kin-nikinnik." It is very fragrant, and they were very fond of it.

No 5 is the spotted Touch-me-not or Jewel weed, Impatiens biflora. Well, a relation of the Balsams of our gardens.

The flower is orange-colored, thickly spotted with brown, it ends in a strongly inflexed spur. The ripened capsule when touched explodes, scattering the seeds, hence its popular name. This plant, too, was "good medicine" for the Indians, pumped the stem and leaves and applied them to the skin as a remedy for rash and eczema.

I am very glad to have been of assistance to "C.M." in this matter, and heartily commend the spirit which leads her to collect our native plants.

A NEW PLANT Professor R. R. Hurst has forwarded to me for record a plant which is new to the Island flora. It is the Running Mallow, Malva rotundifolia L., which is widely distributed in the rest of Canada and the U.S.A. but is apparently scarce here. It is naturalized from Europe, where it has many popular names, attesting to its frequent occurrence. The country people call it "cheeses" from the appearance of the circle of carpels, while round-leaved Mallow, Low M and Dwarf M, are other appellations. Like the rest of its order, this plant contains a considerable quantity of mucilage, and has been employed in the preparation of a favorite cottage remedy for colds and other disorders of the mucous membrane.

And, again, it serves in the maintenance of soil productivity by constantly liberating in its decomposition certain small amounts of mineral matter in forms peculiarly available for absorption by the roots of plants.—Dominion Chemist.

Our other mallow, Malva moschata L., is one of our few wild plants that deserve a place in the garden. It is known as the Musk Mallow.

(If one could collect all the items scattered through the files of The Guardian, what a splendid "Natural History" of the Province could be compiled!)

THE BIRDHOUSE CONTEST Miss Ruth E. Cairns, of Dunstaffnage, who was, I recollect, one of the successful competitors in a former "Feed the Birds Contest," still maintains her interest in matters ornithological, and sends in a good letter:

"Dear Agricola:—In reference to the Birdhouse Contest which is open to the school children of Prince Edward Island, I have my birdhouses out, and they are not occupied by any birds this summer. I think the birds prefer the houses which mother nature has provided for them."

Our house has a great many trees around it, which are always well occupied by my little feathered friends. There are both fir and hardwoods, as well as an avenue of giant linden trees. In these canopies of nature nest such birds as Grackles, Robins, Canaries, chickadees, Bluejays, Woodpeckers, and Graybirds; while under the eaves of the barn nest the Swallows and the Sparrows, the latter of which are very numerous.

These birds are always a pretty sight in their chic gay dresses of down, and what a cheerful sound to those who are in need of cheer! The hard practical value which such birds represent to the farmer (besides the pleasure of their ever refreshing company) is difficult to estimate. They destroy enormous quantities of grubs, beetles and bugs of all sorts. They help to keep the worms which attack fruit trees under control, as well as the parasites which attack other kinds of valuable trees. They destroy many of the insects which are always a menace to the farmer's crops, and if it were not for the birds the crops would be smaller.

I think that the man or boy who willfully tries to destroy one of the farmer's best friends, does not realize the irreparable damage he is doing. This contest is endeavoring to bring before the boy of today and the man of tomorrow the view that the birds are among the most useful and faithful friends that mankind is privileged to possess. It is an attempt on the part of the promoter to teach us more and more about our little feathered allies, to teach us to love and protect them, and when we have learned the lesson well, to pass it on to others." (Sgd.) Ruth E. Cairns Countersigned, M. Terrell, Teacher

THE PRIZES

Each of the contestants whose names appear below will receive a copy of Dr. Taverner's "Birds of Eastern Canada," a work which they will appreciate more and more as the years go by.

(1) Ruth Jenkins, Mt. Allison, (2) Irma G. Bagnall, Hunter River, (3) Ruth E. Cairns, Dunstaffnage

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detail. Mr. Tufts came to the Island a day earlier than he at first intended, so as to visit Brackley shown were different from those in the evening. "We had a splendid meeting. Some of the boys from West Royalty School who took part in your "Feed-the-Birds" contest were there, and rather surprised Mr. Tufts with their knowledge of birds, and were able to name every one on the screen.

The slides and motion pictures would have to be seen to be appreciated. One view was a mixed picture of wild life and showed Cranes, Canada Geese, Swans, Loons, Ducks and Sandpipers on the Evangeline Beach. This itself was a treat well worth seeing. When the sandpipers circled round and showed the white under the wing, they looked just like a snow-storm. Thousands of them! The wild goose and her young the old crane on the tree, the hawk feeding her nestlings, the yellow warbler feeding her young ones on a man's knee, papa, mamma, and the baby deer, the lordly bull moose, the boys feeding the young foxes all made wonderful pictures.

The reel showing Gray Owl, the Indian guide, with his colony of beavers in the Riding Mountain Park, was amazing. They would come at his call and he would pat them on the head, and he would beg him for food, take apples out of his hand, eat rice out of a plate using their forepaws for spoons, it was very amusing to see. It was a beautiful sight to see the young beavers feeding out of a bottle and going to sleep on the guide's shoulder.

At the close of this meeting votes of thanks were moved by some of the teachers present. Dr. J. S. Jenkins, who with his family was present, spoke a nice word of appreciation and encouragement, and hoped that this movement for protecting and preserving our birds would grow until this Island would become a bird's paradise.

The Souris meeting was very largely attended, and the same slides and reels were shown there as at Brackley. They were much appreciated. The children here did not know the birds quite so well, but judging from the interest taken, they will not long be behind. The usual votes of thanks were passed to the speaker, as well as to Father Murray for so kindly placing the Hall at disposal; and to Mr. J. Frank Sterns who acted as chairman and made the necessary arrangements.

Hunter River had a splendid meeting. It was easily seen that the children had had some training along this line, thanks to the Women's Institute as well as to a few very interested friends. Plans are being made to get an "Atlas of Birds" in this school, the birds are shown in natural colors and the cost is two dollars. Some time a little later on, more particulars will

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