CROPS AND FORESTS SAVED BY BIRDS.

From "The Practical Value of Birds."

(By Junius Henderson).

Birds that ordinarily take small numbers of insects as food take them in much larger quantities when the insects become more abundant. The same is true of birds that eat mice, gophers, prairie-dogs and other destructive mammals. The facility with which birds, within certain limits, may turn from one kind of food to another and the ease with which they pass from one locality to another, make them especially valuable as enemies of agricultural pests, and enable them often to save crops, orchards, and forests from destruction.

It is well known to naturalists that when insects, rodents, or other food for birds become unusually plentiful in a particular locality, birds flock to the vicinity from quite a distance. There are numerous apparently well-authenticated instances of such gatherings mentioned in the literature. How the birds discover these unusual local conditions is not always clear. There is reason for the belief that in some instances the mortality of young birds is reduced because of the abundance of food, resulting in a real increase in the total numbers of birds, not a mere assembling of scattered birds from the surrounding region, but that is quite certainly not always the case.

An interesting and instructive instance is furnished by Eastern Massachusetts, where a great increase in the rabbit population during a favourable season was followed the next winter by an unusual number of Great Horned Owls, which fed extensively upon the rabbits.

Possibly the best-known incident of the sort is that of the Gulls and crickets in the early history of Utah, which has been related in many publications. Myriads of crickets, having destroyed one crop in the Salt Lake Valley, were fast ruining the second, which would have left the people, in the absence of trans-