

## BIRDS AND THE FARMER.

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The findings of the Central States Forest Experiment Station at Columbus, Ohio, will come somewhat as a shock to those wrestling with our many farm problems. Misuse of farm woodlots, the experiment station finds, is speeding the departure if not the extermination of birds most valuable in preying upon the farmers' enemy—insect pests.

In the Corn Belt and other extensively cultivated regions of the Central States, the experiment station has found that the farm woodlots are the birds' main hope of perpetuating themselves since practically all the rest of the land is tilled or in pastures. The woodlot alone offers sanctuary and natural breeding habitat for bird life, provided the woods are kept attractive to birds. Unfortunately this is just what the average farmer is not doing. Ninety per cent. of the woodlots in the Corn Belt country, it is revealed, are used for grazing and are so heavily grazed as to make them unfit and unattractive for birds. According to Mr. Day, more than half the bird life of the woodlot nest on the ground or in the undergrowth of the woods, and this half includes practically all the insectivorous species important to the farmer and fruit grower. Heavy grazing as practised by most farmers is thus destroying the nesting and breeding places of birds most important to him. Elimination of the undergrowth in the woodlots is likewise destroying an important source of food for birds.

The findings of the experiment station are of tremendous importance and significance not only to the farmer but to the farm states and to the nation. Millions of dollars are spent every year to fight insects preying upon farm crops. The practice of overgrazing woodlands in the Central States and thereby exterminating bird life is simply encouraging the insect hordes and making the problem of crop production more difficult, hazardous and expensive. In times of drought the insect hazard is raised to a high degree, but with bird life lacking it becomes a menace of national potentialities.

It is to be hoped that the facts and conditions revealed by the study in question will be seized upon by agricultural agencies in the States concerned and by the Federal Government to the end that the farmer may be made to realise that abuse of his woodlots contributes to his farm problems.