

Through a very large amount of scientific research it is now known that the great majority of wild birds are highly beneficial to man, that many other species do much more good than harm, and that very few do more harm than good. This information forms the foundation of the laws for the protection of non-game birds which have been enacted in many States, not at the behest of sentimentalists, for aesthetic reasons, but upon the urgent recommendation of the Department of Agriculture, for purely practical reasons. So thoroughly is the economic value of birds now established that even Italy, where destruction of small birds was greatest, has enacted laws for their protection.*

Some species are with us the year round, others remain only during the summer, while others come in from the North to spend the winter months. Thus the good work goes on winter and summer, from the peep of dawn to the late hours of twilight, the owls even working on night shift. The birds, with their extremely variable but in a very large measure useful food habits, fill a large place in the Economy of Nature. It is strange that men were so long in coming to recognise the value of the feathered tribe, and even at the present time there is appalling and widespread ignorance of the real facts, even among otherwise well-informed people.

Perhaps it was the fact that in some European and other countries insectivorous song birds are still considered a source of human food, or possibly the fact that not a great while ago such useful birds as the Flicker were sold in the open markets of the United States that inspired this bit of verse:—

I saw with open eyes
Singing birds sweet
Sold in the shops
For people to eat,
Sold in the shops of
Stupidity Street.

I saw in a vision
The worm in the wheat,
And in the shops nothing
For people to eat;
Nothing for sale in
Stupidity Street.

—Ralf Hodgson.

—Extracted from "*The Practical Value of Birds*," by Junius Henderson.

* *Science*, n. s., XLIII., 65, 1916.



There is one California man who is keenly interested in the weather probabilities. Convicted of leaving a camp fire burning in a forest, he was sentenced to stay in gaol "until it rains."