

He was the father of a family and brought two of his infants with him. It was ridiculous to see these fluffy hunched-up bantlings swinging their heads and bodies from side to side as they squeaked for food, though at the same time they showed that they were perfectly capable of getting their own dinners by picking up crumbs almost at their father's feet, as he fed them. Another cock chaffinch looked very worn with family cares, and was constantly collecting food and flying off with it. He was almost as tame as the first chaffinch, but the others were more wary. All were extremely quarrelsome; in fact, they seemed more nervous of each other's presence than of ours. The tamest of the chaffinches were all cocks; hens came too, but they were far shyer. This was unexpected: I think the explanation is that while the hens were incubating the cocks had fed daily and hourly at our bird-tables, and had become inured to our proximity.

"I never succeeded in inducing any of these chaffinches to feed from my hand, though I have in times past had several robins who would do so. The chaffinches became suspicious as soon as I held my fingers near the level of the flags on which the crumbs were spread, though they took food only a few inches distant from my finger-ends. I was surprised to find that the fledgling chaffinches showed the same suspicion. Was this wariness a piece of inherited instinct, or did they learn discretion from their father's example? Such questions may seem trivial, but if we could interpret them correctly they might lead to the elucidation of some of the most secret



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mysteries of bird behaviour. The border line between instinct and intelligence in birds and animals is a very tenuous one: it is only by careful observation of individuals that we can ever hope to discriminate; even the smallest incident properly understood may prove to be a clue of infinite importance.

"No doubt some fortunate human beings are endowed with a certain magnetism which disarms the suspicions of wild birds.