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The Birds of Franklin and Macon

THE following editorial, reprinted from The Franklin Press of July 1931, was written by the late Stanhope Sams, LL.D., literary editor of the Columbia, South Carolina State, while spending his vacation in Franklin:

Among the attractions of Franklin and Macon county that instantly appeal to the visitor . . . after the first amazement of mountain and valley . . . are the number, variety, and melodious chorus of the Birds.

Of course, this section is within the great Bird Realm of the South, in which, perhaps, a larger number and wider variety of Birds may be found than in any other section, unless it is slightly excelled by the Kensington region near Washington. But whatever advantage that locality may have is due to the migrant Birds that flit across it, some making their winter flight toward the Gulf, and others their spring and mating flight toward the forests of the northern states and Canada. There must be, of course, many migrants, birds of passage, in this mountain region of West North Carolina, but most of them seem to be home Birds, residents and neighbors for the whole year.

And the county-side and town lawns and gardens offer an appealing lure for the Birds. They love a grain-growing country. And they love a country-side that abounds, as this does, in succulent berries and a wonderful bird-table of foods of great variety. The abundance, also, of trees, groves, and forests, in the town and along all the slopes, up to the umbrageous crowns of Trimont and her sister crests, afford the Birds shelter by day and night and leafy places of retirement and noon-day repose. For the Birds must have their shaded siestas.

One is almost astounded to hear, ringing clear and fresh from the edge of garden or grove, the inspiring call of "Bob-White." This never fails, in the early morning or in the cool of the afternoon, for Bob-White walks in the garden in the cool of the day, as we are told that God himself did in the arbors of Eden. The Franklin Bob-White is emboldened by the friendliness of his neighbors, and he frequently visits, in his short sharp forays, the gardens and orchards of the town.

Possibly the sweetest song that greets us from the groves and wood is that of the Thrush—the Wood-Thrush. Possibly the note of the Hermit Thrush may be caught on the edges of the forests, for this Bird loves the quiet and solitude of the deep woods, and no doubt is heard with memorable frequency even from the hills and gardens of Franklin. The Wood-Thrush is, however, the sweetest singer, to our notion. His song has phrases and dulcet harmonies that haunt us longer than even the "holy-holy" chant of the Hermit. And there are many Wood-Thrushes, and one may hear a Thrush note almost any minute, if only one will himself be mute and listen and adore.

The squawking Jay, though not so large or handsome as his fellows of mid-South Carolina, who are famous among Jays, is yet a fine looking bird. His cries, mostly imitative or stolen from the Hawk, are enlivening as are his presence and brusque busy-ness in interfering with other birds. He does a good deal of injury, but not enough to justify his extinction.

The Robin is, of course, the observed of all observers. He and his less brilliant mate are part of every out-of-doors scene. His song is rather monotonous, although it is sparkling and cheery to most auditors. An exceedingly helpful bird to farmers and gardeners; tireless and insatiate devourer of hurtful insects and cut-worms. The bird kingdom, without the Robin, would be Denmark without the Dane.

The splendid King-bird, Bee-Martin, or Tyrannus-tyrannus, head of his clan, is a superb fighter and guardian of the air, gardens, fields and woods. He drives off all bird-raiders including the Raptors, or Hawks.

The Flycatchers, especially Peto, the Least Flycatcher, are fairly frequent visitors on their aerial foray and safaris, against winged insects. Peto may be long watched with keen interest as he darts out, plucks his victim from the air, and returns to his carefully chosen perch of observation.

The Mocking-bird is rarer here than he is farther south, but his department-store assortment of glorious chattering and mimicry is heard many times every favorable day. While he is a greater artist than, a greater virtuoso, than the Wood-Thrush, his whole repertoire is not so precious as the solitary and matchless song of the Thrush.

Another sweet singer of Israel is the little Song-Sparrow. But one must pay rapt attention to catch his delicious and delicate grace notes from some spray or tree-top or from the sequestered heart of tree or bush. His song, like that of lute or zither, is the "chamber-music" of the bird choristers.

Nor should we neglect the "chirppings" that give his name to little Chipping Sparrow, the small-boy chorister, wearing a white band, doubtless some order bestowed upon him, over his bright little eyes.

The soft cooing of the uxorious (wife loving) Dove is now heard in the mornings and late afternoons, as he murmurs delicious encouragement to his brooding mate—a sweet, but somewhat too soothing and melancholy a song.

The Cardinal seems somewhat shy in this commune of Birds. We do not know why, but we have invariably caught his keen whistle, crackling like sharp whip-lashes on horns of elfland faintly blowing. Why, we wonder, is the Cardinal . . . Red-bird . . . so aloofish here, when he is so warmly and neighborly friendly in other parts of the warm south? He should be heard and his startling loveliness seen oftener.

And there is, of course, the "nuzzling Nuthatch," uttering his "cheerio" single note, quickly repeated, "as if you thought he never could recapture that first fine careless rapture." This was said or sung of the "wise Thrush" (by Browning) but we like to apply it to that listened-for second cheer of the little sprite as he clambers, head first, DOWN the dizzy tree-trunk. He is, we believe, the only master acrobat among the birds, that can achieve so easily this smart trick

of running down tree boles as if he were hopping about on the lawn.

Red-Head, the glorious woodpecker so called, is a glamorous pageant in himself, with his black and white uniform and his red crest. His song or cry, the latter a predatory ranging cry of the eagle or hawk—for, like the jay, he has borrowed his slogan from fighting kings of the air—is exceedingly, almost, extravagantly, exhilarating. It is a challenge to be up and doing, a summons to battle.

There is also an occasional Golden Flicker. This is a larger woodpecker than Red-Head, and a more showy fellow, and his similar ranging cry a little louder than his, but he is not so friendly and not "the free and flowing savage" that Red-Head always is. He bears a number of titles, like a member of the British peerage . . . Flicker, Golden Flicker, High-Hole (because of the unusual height at which he builds his "better 'ole,") and Yellowhammer. This last principally in the deep south.

We have seen here, also, the alluring Starling—fondled and invited in Europe (Russia is building 2,000,000 feed-houses for him!) but ignorantly suspected in this country—a strikingly handsome bird, worth his weight in gold just as an adornment to the lawn or the scenery.

We have seen, also, a rare visitor, the Redstart, never forgotten, once seen, because of the brightness of his uniform and the slender grace of body and plumage. And, of course, Hawks and an Eagle—an occasional raider of the forests—crows and blackbirds, and other of the long-settled bird-residents.

If we have omitted any prominent or important Bird, . . . and all Birds are important, to nature-lovers, farmers, gardeners, orchardists, . . . we trust they will forgive us. There lacks space and time for our praise and fond devotions.

But we hope that the human neighbors of these Birds, that are doing so much to help uplift the heavy weight of depression, by their cheery songs and by their heroic and tremendous onslaught on the insect enemies of man and nature, will guard and nourish the Birds, their earth-born companions and fellow mortals. They are the friends and helpers and vigilant sentinels and allies of all that must, like them, draw their sustenance from Nature.

Big Potato Surplus Harrasses Farmers; Pleases Consumers

A potato surplus has raised its head above the crop production horizon and is rapidly advancing toward us consumers. Potato farmers aren't too happy about it, but buyers are pleased, because surplus usually walks arm-in-arm with lower prices.

Potato farmers last year averaged \$1.32 a bushel for the early crop. And that was a sufficiently enticing figure that a lot of those who normally grow only enough for home use, decided to put two to four acres or more in "spuds" this year. The 19 states which figure in production of the very early on through the intermediate crops put 25 per cent more land into potato production than they did in 1936.

With this prospect of large supply plus lower prices, there'll likely be increased amounts of potatoes in the market baskets of the nation. Unless the late potato crop changes the picture.

So highly is the potato regarded by scientists of the bureau of home economics that they give it an important place in the diet of people of every income level. In their recent publication "Diets to Fit the Family Income," they include eight to nine servings a week in the "emergency diet" for people on very low incomes. That means 11 pounds of potatoes a week for a family of four, or 19 pounds for a family of seven.

And for the liberal diet, for people who can afford a wide variety of foods, they list one serving of potatoes apiece a day—nine pounds a week for a family of four, 16 pounds for a family of seven. Not much fewer potatoes than in the emergency diet.

These dietary plans would put our yearly consumption figure at 165 pounds each for people of the lower incomes, and 155 pounds apiece, for people of well-to-do families.

These are interesting totals, in view of the fact that in 1932, it was estimated that an average of 150 pounds of potatoes a person was "made way with." That is what is called a "disappearance figure," however, and the average of potatoes eaten would be somewhere below that amount.

The potato has been the innocent victim of a widespread notion that it is exceptionally fattening. Weight conscious Americans have come to look with suspicion on it simply because it is listed among the starchy foods.

Actually 78 per cent of this sturdy vegetable is water—only 11 to 21 per cent being starch. One medium size potato totals 100 calories. But so does each of the following: 1 large apple, 1 large orange, 1 medium baking powder biscuit, 1½ tablespoons French salad dressing. And since 3,000 calories is estimated to be the daily calorie total needed by the average fairly active adult man, a medium size potato a day could hardly take the blame for his having to let out his belt several holes.

Americans who are trying to keep

their youthful figures should cut out several other types of food before they do the potato, say dieticians. Foods—such as sugar, fats, and oils—which are considerably more fattening and which carry none of the potato's minerals and vitamins.

The potato has dietary virtues that have been ignored by the general public. It is a fair source of vitamin C. Weight for weight it has a fourth as much of this vitamin as do oranges and lemons, which are so rich in it—half as much as that of tomatoes. It also has a little of vitamins A, B, and G.

The potato makes an important contribution to the diet, too, through its minerals—particularly iron and phosphorus.

The indifference of some people to this vegetable is partly due to its being badly prepared so much of the time. Appearance, flavor, and food value are all influenced by the cooking technique.

Cooking in the skin—whether in baking, boiling, or steaming—conserves the maximum amount of a potato's food value.

Baking potatoes isn't usually associated with summer cookery, but the two are not necessarily incompatible. As soon as the potato is mature it can be baked. The temperature best for baking—400 to 425 degrees F.—dextrinizes the starch, caramelizes some of the surface sugar, and therefore changes the flavor.

The pleasing mealiness of a baked potato is gradually lost as the potato cools or steams. So the cook should do some pretty close timing, to get it done just as dinner is ready. To let the steam escape and thus prevent sogginess developing, cut a cross on one side of the baked potato as soon as you get it out of the oven. Then pick it up (in a cloth to keep from getting burned) and squeeze it a bit, to loosen up the "innards" and make a little of it bulge up into that cross-cut slash. If dinner is to be delayed a bit, remove from the skins, mash, and beat up with cream or butter, pile back into the skins and reheat.

The skin tells whether or not the potato is mature enough to bake. If it curls up, or as men in the trade say "if it is feathered," the potato is immature. If the skin is set and firm the potato is mature.

Boiling potatoes. It is simply impossible to pare a potato so as not to have considerable food loss, and the loss is increased with varieties that slough badly. A large percentage of the minerals is in the cortical layer—just under the skin. Cooking in the skin also prevents the escape of certain volatile compounds and so results in a different flavor than boiling when pared.

Have the water already boiling rapidly when you put the potatoes in, and then cook them with the water boiling rapidly and continuously. Too vigorous boiling, however, makes potatoes, especially

pared ones, go to pieces more quickly.

As soon as the potatoes are done, take them from the boiling water and remove the skins. They'll get waterlogged if you leave them in the water, and will be less flaky when mashed if you delay removing the skins.

Steaming potatoes in the skins, too, saves nutrients. The steaming should be rapid, and the skins removed at once, for maximum mealiness, minimum danger of sogginess.

As to preparing potatoes—there are the usual ways: au gratin, shoestrings, chips, and hash browned. And you remember Lyonnaise potatoes: fry some chopped onion a few minutes, then add your diced cooked potatoes.

Then there's potato O'Brien, for which you mix diced potatoes, chopped onions, and green peppers or pimiento, and seasonings. Cook in a little fat at low heat.

A quick potato soup recipe has the milk heated in a double boiler and then adds it to bitter-flour thickening, stirring constantly, and then puts in grated raw potatoes and onion seasonings, and cooks 10 minutes.

A good curry dish is made with chopped onion and grated cheese. Cook the chopped onion in a little fat until it is a golden brown, add diced cooked potatoes, and curry powder that has been mixed in a little cold water, pour into a serving dish, sprinkle grated cheese over the top and serve at once.

Specialists Offer Mid-Summer Advice

Many mid-summer farm tasks about the farm and home require information and suggestions which State college specialists are offering on the Carolina farm feature radio program.

Some crops are being harvested; others are just being started, and there are others not yet ready for harvest which are being cultivated.

The agricultural experts are arranging their discussions to conform with timely practices.

Insects and plant diseases take their toll yearly. Yet many dollars could be saved each farmer if he would follow preventative and control practices.

Already this year the flea beetle has damaged thousands of dollars worth of tobacco in northwestern counties.

With a favorable season and no control practices, the boll weevil may cut cotton production sharply this season. However, by the application of prescribed methods, farmers can check the weevil attacks.

The Carolina farm features schedule in full for the week of June 28—July 3 follows: Monday, John A. Arey, "Making Good Hay;" Tuesday, M. E. Gardner, "Selling Fruits and Vegetables;" Wednesday, S. L. Clement, "Supply and Export Situation of American Tobacco;" Thursday, Miss Ruth Current, "State College Farm and Home Week;" Friday, C. F. Parrish, "Timely Poultry Practices;" and Saturday, 4-H Club program.

N. C. Poultrymen Rank High In U. S.

RALEIGH, N. C. June 31.—Hatcherymen and poultrymen of North Carolina rank high in the United States in both breed improvement and Pullorum disease control work, reports H. S. Wilfong, senior poultrymen of the state department of agriculture who recently returned from the conference on the national poultry improvement plan which was held in Chicago.

The conference was attended by delegates representing 41 participating states.

"These representatives were in agreement that this plan is the means whereby poultry and hatchery products will be standardized throughout the nation in regard to name and quality, or, as the preamble of the plan states, 'the primary purpose of the national poultry improvement plan is to identify authoritatively poultry breeding stock, hatching eggs and chicks by describing them in terms uniform acceptable in all parts of the country,'" Mr. Wilfong said.

No major changes were made in the present plan, but several amendments were adopted that will be beneficial to poultry of the state, including a special section which will enable turkey breeders to cooperate, he said.