

# *A Day in May at Sprucedale Farm*

*By C. Stuart Francis, Torch River*

Today is May 24th, and a grand day it is, with blue sky and fleecy clouds and the prospect of a thunder shower for later in the day the temperature at 76°, with a few thunderheads beginning to appear in the western sky at 12 o'clock noon. After many cold days and frosty nights, the trees and shrubs, flowers and grass are at last beginning to show signs of real awakening, as birds and blossoms are bursting out in every direction.

The various species of pines have already put on several inches of new growth in the form of waxy candles; the spruce buds are pushing off their winter caps, and the cedar have returned to their summer color of light green, after their bronze plumage of winter. Basswood are showing pinkish-white buds, and Mountain Ash are unfurling their lacy leaves, while Plum and crab Apple may burst into full bloom at almost any moment, and a score of other trees and shrubs are all putting on their summer dresses.

Birds are everywhere, hopping on the ground, singing in the trees or flying here, there and everywhere. Just around the barnyard can be seen the following—all very busy with their daily activities: Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Evening Grosbeak, Purple Finch, Vesper Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Harris Sparrow, English Sparrow, Brewer Blackbirds, Grackles, Cowbirds, Canada Jays and Blue Jays, Tree Swallows and Barn Swallows and Purple Martins. Keeping the Wild Geese company are to be seen the following ducks: Mallard, Pintail, Baldpate, Blue-winged Teel, Green-winged Teel, Golden-eye, and one day, a pair of Buffle-heads. Also



*Spring at Sprucedale.*

along with the ducks and geese can be seen Snipe, Yellow-legs, Kildeer, Solitary Sandpiper and Spotted Sandpiper. Just beyond the farmyard in the more open fields can be seen Horned Lark, Lapland Longspur, Pipit, Crow, Marsh Hawk and Red-tailed Hawk. Flying from one grove to another can be seen Flickers, Sapsuckers and an occasional Northern Pileated Woodpecker.

Flowers are beginning to show up everywhere, Dandelion, Wild Strawberry, Violet, Marsh Marigold, etc. Over at the west farm the Beaver are mending their dams after the spring floods, and seeking out fresh green twigs which must surely be

enjoyed after the long winter diet of water-soured and stale poplar logs and willow brush. At the west farm too, yesterday, a big lazy Black Bear just sat on his tail beside the grain bin and watched the boys working up the soil with their John Deere. He also, is really enjoying the spring weather, while the Deer graze here and there, seeming not to be satisfied to eat in one place for even a half minute, but

to find something just a little better further along.

The wheat is showing in the rows; the rhubarb is nearly ready for the pie, and the patch of Wild Onions—for those who like onions are just right for a sandwich.

As soon as the crop and gardens are all in, and the fences fixed, we'll be heading for the "Lake" to do a bit of fishing, fix up the cabin, for almost before we know it, it will be midsummer and the "First of July."

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## *Seen From a City Window*

*Horace and Frances Croome, Regina*

Our lot is only 25 feet by 125 feet but what a number of feathered visitors come for food—water—to bathe and to bask in the sunshine along the fence! Even a bee had a bath one day!

Just outside the dining room window are a plum tree, a bird bath and a feeding tray. All winter we kept pieces of suet-fat tied to the tree branches. Ham rind fat seemed a special favorite as well as fat from the neck skin of a chicken that we stuck on a thorn of the tree. On the feeding tray, as well as the usual crumbs, we put out a beef bone, fish bones and fishy skin. As they picked away at these, what a chance we had to watch them!

The first to touch the bones was an Olive-backed Thrush—then a Robin. After the first day they would peck-peck away, then fly off to a tree or fence for a sunning. Of course there were numbers of sparrows always around. We were surprised to see how early in the season they started to bathe in the bird bath. We would

pour warm water on the thin ice and soon—down they would come.

When the plum tree was in full bloom and the air filled with fragrance, the bees and insects hovered over it almost like a cloud.

Birds that we have seen and identified are Robins, Olive-backed Thrush, Juncos, Tree Sparrows, White-crowned Sparrow, Yellow Warblers, Baltimore Oriole and Grackle.

Later in the season on the plum tree, we put bits of soft string and colored wool. It all disappeared. Then we put out shredded rope. The rope seemed just what the Baltimore Oriole wanted, for he would come time and time again—to fill his beak and away he would fly.

One day a Grackle came to the bird bath with a large crust that he dipped and turned over in the water before he ate it. Some he carried away.

None of the birds seemed to notice us at the window unless we make a sudden movement—then away they fly.