

The Hazards of Migrating Birds

Arthur Ward, Swift Current

The unusual climatic conditions of the past two springs have been a disturbing factor in the distribution of migratory birds in our district. Most species found the nesting sites in wooded areas with the trees devoid of leaves and must have gone further north to the cone belt. The Olive-backed Thrush returned in the usual numbers accompanied by smaller numbers of Gray Cheeks.

We were delighted to have the nesting box under the eaves, which had been intended for the Robin, taken up by the Says Phoebe. Prolonged wet weather seemed to delay them for they would lay off for awhile. Finally the nest was finished and we watched the display of these energetic birds from the window. During spells of gloomy weather, when other insects were lacking, they would turn to the ants and pick them from the ground. Unfortunately after laying three eggs something must have happened to the female, leaving the male sitting disconsolately on a perch. Soon it too disappeared.

I have banded this species and have had them return to the same nest for three consecutive years. This can also be said of the Barn Swallow. The Brown Thrasher and the Yellow Warbler, too, have been caught in the same trap. Two instances have been noticed, where after being hatched, a male Brown Thrasher fed to maturity the four young birds after the female parent was found dead. Again in our next door garden in the city a female bob-tailed robin disappeared and we watched the male feed the young robins until they left the nest.

Banding birds is always found to be more interesting when a new specie is added. The Meadowlark, though common in every place, would not be expected to walk into permanent traps set for most birds. The nest was found on the banks of the Swift Current Creek, containing six eggs, which I photographed and afterwards banded five lively youngsters as fledglings. Now they are able to fly and are away.

At the banding station at the farm, many of the usual species are missing. Incessant rains caused much discomfort. Then a terrific hail storm of a hundred percent damage to crops in our area must have caused much loss to bird life.

In the Gooseberry bush the parent Catbirds, which I have banded and also photographed the eggs, suffered the loss of the young in the nest by hail. This must also have been the fate of the Arkansas and Eastern Kingbirds nearby. Truly the hazards of our migrating birds are great.

Friends of a Feather

By John A. Popoff, Yorkton

*The names of birds I do not know
Except an odd one now and then,
But I'm not blind as to their kind
And kinship to us men.*

*With pleasures bright from morn till
night
They fill our days till late,
Each one a sight to give delight
With chirp from mate to mate.*

*How I would miss my morn of bliss
With rising of the sun,
If sights or sound did not abound
At day's commencing run!*

*We creatures share a joy so rare
When we stop to admire
The little friend who comes to spend
With us his heart's desire.*

*Let's help him in his busy days
Make life with us a merry time;
We'll be repaid a million ways
In happiness sublime.*