

## *The Housing Problem*

Mrs. E. F. HILLIER, Gregherd, Sask.

Having just spent an interesting hour or so, I thought others might be interested also.

As I was busy working in my garden on June 22 I heard quite a commotion coming from the direction of the bird house, presently occupied by a pair of Bluebirds who are very busy feeding a family of nestlings. I saw what appeared to be two quite large Swallows trying to oust the Bluebirds from their home. Mrs. Bluebird was sitting in her doorway keeping the intruders out while Father Bluebird was doing his best to chase them away.

I decided to investigate and found that it was a pair of Purple Martins. I have not seen these birds in late years at all, although they did nest in this locality 30 to 35 years ago.

I have another bird house ( a piece of hollow tree trunk) on a telephone pole near our house which I had recently stuffed with paper to keep out a pair of House Sparrows. I took this paper out and within a few minutes Mr. and Mrs. Martin had found what I do hope will be their new home. It seems to me rather late for these birds to start nesting but perhaps they have been unable to find housing accommodation until now.

The housing problem seems to have hit the bird population as well as the human! We have a pair of Kingbirds who insist on building in our eaves-trough. They tried a couple of times last year and we have had to destroy their nest twice this year. I hope they will soon decide on a more suitable spot — from our point of view.

## *The Summer Birds Left Early*

Mrs. F. BILSBURY, Grenfell, Sask.

Everything, we are told, depends on weather, and how very true this is! The weather during 1952 was above normal and this year it was out of all proportion.

For as far back as I can remember I have fed winter birds. In our locality these are not of a large variety. Chickadees and the large and small black and white Woodpeckers all arrive with the first snow and seem to leave as soon as the sun gets to work in earnest on the snow. Last winter I noticed a decided increase in all these birds.

Dozens of Chickadees came for suet placed in a hollowed out log, so I put a large spike through a good sized piece of pork fat with the rind left on and nailed to the clothes line post to take care of the demand. One large male Woodpecker and two females came every day as well as three pairs of the smaller Downy Woodpeckers. They took no notice of me as I went about various outdoor tasks.

The Chickadees left this year around the end of May, but a few came back for food. Since heaviest rains I have not seen any. This year I saw a Crested Flycatcher for the first time. Also a Hummingbird fluttered at the window seeking food from a flower inside.

By July 2nd our usual summer birds had moved on. Orioles, Verios and some Flycatchers are gone. The Bluebirds returned to nest after the late bad snow storm but are now gone. The Kingbirds again nested in the eaves-trough but abandoned it because of rains.

Several water birds and different species of Ducks have returned. Bitterns seem to be more plentiful. After contending with snow and cold the birds must now put up with rain and many, I believe, have left early in disgust. In past years strawstacks left over from winter provided many birds with both food and shelter. Also large stands of trees and scrub have been cut down and burned forcing birds to keep going until they