

SIMPLY BIRDS

By Mrs. John Hubbard Jr., Grenfell.

ONE OF MY PET pastimes (A farmer's wife with five small children doesn't need a pastime) is keeping a migration list of the birds I see each spring. I've been doing it since 1938, but John does most of the spotting these days. I've identified around 170 species since I started and have seen quite a few things of interest.

Towards sunset one evening this spring, a flock of from 30 to 40 white pelicans passed by, evidently headed for the Qu'Appelle Lakes. They were a beautiful sight—as spectacular as the Whistling Swans I saw one spring at the Indian Head Experimental Farm.

In the spring of 1941, when I didn't know my hawks very well, John and I saw a flight of hawks, including buzzards, accipiters, falcons and the Marsh Hawk. It lasted all one afternoon. Loose groups of hawks varying in numbers up to a dozen could be seen in all directions, wheeling and circling, dipping and diving. Now that I know the hawks better, I would give my money's worth to see that sight again.

Sometimes when you're just moseying along, some startling beautiful bird pops up. Such was the Evening Grosbeak in full summer dress we saw one noon at the Farm; Scarlet Tanagers that I saw at the same spot two successive springs; the Purple Finches we saw here two or three springs, and the Spotted Towhee who graced me with a split-second view at the Forestry Farm and departed, not to be seen again.

The young Golden Eagle, who dropped out of the skies one fall to

grab one of my pullets, was an unexpected visitor. He departed hurriedly, dropping the pullet when the men yelled at him.

One winter a little Saw-Whet Owl inhabited our garage for a few days and lent substance to the belief that an owl's head will go completely round. This winter a young Snowy Owl, in startling black and white coloration, perched on the power pole in the middle of the yard and surveyed the goings-on below, before moving off with that silent leisured beat that has something sinister about it. And thinking of him I remember my first Snowy Owl, a spotless white specimen I saw as a child at Snipe Lake, and which sent my brother and myself almost breathless into Mother to announce we'd seen an Angel. Hardly an Angel, this visitor from the far north.

But my first Snowy did not startle me any more than did the Mountain Bluebird I scared up from his night's vigil, this spring. I was visiting my chicken brooder late at night and I was afraid it was a bat that was flitting around my head (not liking those creatures overly) till a Mountain Bluebird landed bewildered at my feet, evidently confused by my flashlight. I put out my hand, thinking to pick him up, but he hissed at me in such an ungentlemanly manner that I withdrew my hand and he blundered off into the dark. Seen at a distance these birds are lovely, but seen at close range the brilliance of their colouring and the daintiness of their build are things of wonder.

Not Fond of Catbirds

By Kenneth Knox, Clair.

I LIKE BIRDS and try to make them at home here. However, I do not think much of the Catbird for it destroyed a Bluebirds nest last summer making it necessary for them to rebuild. I think the Catbird is a thief as it also interfered with the Wrens. If they come back this year I will do my utmost to have them destroyed as I hate to see other birds harmed by them.

I love to have birds around. The Orioles and Cedar Waxwings come for string for nest building. They are both lovely birds but the Waxwings tend to be a bit hoggish and take more than their share of the string. A pair of Robins nest each year in our evergreens. Even although they like to sample the strawberries, I do not mind, as they eat lots of insects as well, and their craving for berries seems to disappear after a few days.