Small Worlds Around Us

Lynn W. Watkins

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Man Took Away Actors Which Nature Provided

Her horizons are limited to the immediate neighborhood, just what she can see from her window. She and her wheel chair are inseparable. To her that window is the show place of the world. Her plans for tomorrow and all the tomorrows after that are only continuations of today. What she will see tomorrow are just the little incidents that will take place within the limited range of her vision.

Directly in front of her window and but a few yards away, is a small, square platform on a short post, a feeding station for the wild birds that visit her garden. Every morning a kind-hearted neighbor fills the tray with bird-feed.

The birds that used to come were the actors on the lady's stage. The curtain of her drama rises each day when the dawn comes, closes each day with the setting sun. With the darkness the curtain is down, and she must wait for another dawn. Through a long association she had become familiar with most of the birds that come. Many of them had been friends of long standing; she knew them well, and had a name for many of them. They were her friends, feathered bits of animated life, adding charm, action, song and color to the garden. To her, each and every one of them, jays, sparrows, cardinals, flickers, blackbirds and all the others, were interesting and beautiful.

Diminishing Birds

She felt justified too, in believing she was contributing to the welfare of bird life, both to the song and the game birds, for many quails and doves fed at her table. The ever - constant food supply naturally increased the bird population. In her hours of quiet meditation she figured out the formula. Nature must have planned that the prevalence of wildlife depends mainly on protective cover and ample supplies of food. While the birds were feeding they were never disturbed, for her garden was completely fenced.

During the late summer this shut-in lady began to notice a change. Almost daily she noticed a diminishing number of birds. The flocks that had been coming were shrinking; the ranks were thinning. She had the food changed, thinking perhaps the birds were tired of the same diet day after day. But the bird population continued to decline, and at an alarming rate.

Gradual But Steady

The change at first was gradual, but steady. By the end of 60 days the grain on the feeding platform lay uneaten and untouched. The lady, concerned now, watched and waited but the feathered visitors did not come. The lady has a great deal of time to think, and although she admits she knows a little of conservation methods and purposes; she has nevertheless come to a startling conclusion. What she thought, has later been substantiated somewhat by friends who have told her of countless dead birds, both song and game birds, that have been found, killed without doubt by various poisons used in insect control.

The lady, whose sole enjoyment was derived from watching the bird life in a secluded garden, asks an important question: "Why," she asks, "is it necessary to destroy something beautiful to gain a profit, or satisfy a whim?"

My dear shut-in friend, another summer will come and nature will again exert every effort to repopulate the decimated ranks of bird life, and many will again return to your garden. I'm sure, that in Nature's plan, feathered songsters must again gladden and enliven your garden. Man's bungling and stupidity can only upset the plan for a little while, for nature always wins in the end.

DOWN THE HATCH

NEW YORK (UPI) — Americans are drinking more and more bourbon whiskey. Consumption of the Kentucky-type whiskey hit a record 14 million cases in the first half of 1963, climaxing a steady 10-year rise in sales.

PUFFING AWAY

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The Treasury Department, which watches things like this closely, reports cigarette use in the United States rose by 3.5 per cent during the first six months of this year over the same 1962 period.

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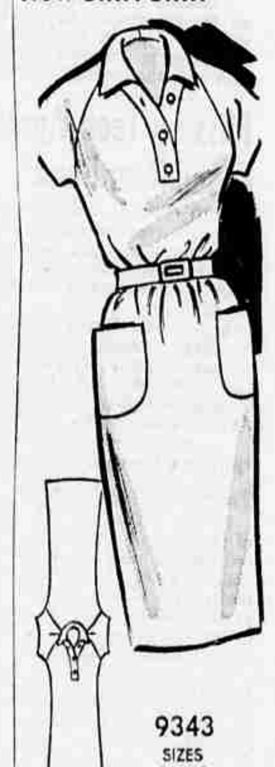

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TREE FARMS

NEW YORK (UPI)—A single tree farm of 1.4 million acres has been added to the tree farm program of American Forest Products Industries, Inc., by Great Northern Paper Co. of Maine. The total enrollment now is 26,052 tree farms comprising 60,140,000 acres.

The Amazon river pours about five million gallons per second into the Atlantic ocean.