

Birds and their foods

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The Tree Sparrows which come to Iowa from the north in October and stay until April consume 875 Tons of weed seed during ~~during~~ their winters visit. To get a better idea of this amount of seed, it means about 60 R.R. car loads or 437 trucks carrying 2 tons each. This amount of seed is destroyed in Iowa each year by one specie of bird alone.

In talking and thinking of the food of birds, it is very easy to look at it as being insignificant because the food particles and the birds themselves are on the average small.

One thing to remember is, the birds body is a very high geared machine running at a very high temperature, which in mammals would be a

fever heat. It takes special food and lots of it to meet their requirements.

Meat, including all food of an animal nature affords the most concentrated form of nourishment, while seeds of all kind with their oily, starchy content comes next in value. To handle the enormous amounts of food needed ~~the~~ the bird has a very rapid and powerful digestive system. One that extracts practically all of the energy producing elements with the least amount of waste.

In checking the food habits of one barn owl in the wild it was found that it consumed the following in one year, 1407 mice, 143 rats, 7 bats, 5 young rabbits, 375 sparrows, 23 starlings, 24 other birds, 52 crickets and other insects. This was accounted for by the exam

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ination of regurgitated pellets found under the roost tree.

It is a very common occurrence for parent birds to make from 200 to 400 trips daily to their nestlings carrying each trip one to two insects or caterpillars.

It would take too long to enumerate the kinds of insects and other kinds of food used by birds, but a summary lately published proves that the food habits of birds in general are beneficial to man. It is important to remember that birds check the over multiplication of insects.

The drinking habits have not been studied much, It is ~~not~~ ^{or} known how much or how often birds need water, and captive sea birds have died for the want of salt water, Land birds need fresh water. In winter birds use snow and ice and some catch

⁴ snow flakes as they fall

A peculiar adaptation of a number of birds is the fact that they drop food a great distance causing it to smash or crush in a manner that allows them to feed quite easily. Some birds such as some of the hawks drop stones on eggs smashing them open. Some of the gulls part of the year feed on fish and the balance of the year on seeds. During the seed feeding period their stomachs enlarge and become muscular like those of the hen.

Some people think that there is something peculiar about pigeons milk. Some think they know all about it, but it is no joke and there is very little known about it or what causes it. Pigeons milk is both milky and cheesy and it is produced in the

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crop of both parents. Just how this
is done is not known as the crop
is not a secretive organ. Probably
a scaling off of particles of the crop
lining. The parents regurgitate this
milky fluid into the mouths of the
young. The regurgitation is due to
two muscles attached to the parents
many thought or wish bone.

A great many birds feed on
fruits but this is regarded a
seasonal luxury.

Honey Guides of Africa call or
lead natives to bee trees. The natives
being sure to leave a quantity of
honey for the birds. Some tropical
birds feed entirely on ants. Sea birds
soaring and skimming over schools
of fish lead the fishermen to good

6 fishing grounds

The bill of the bird probably is the most important in gathering food altho. the tongue, wings, eyes and feet play an important part. Bills are of a wide variety running from spears, scissors, scoops and hooks to the generalized bill of the crow. In feeding itself the bird uses its bill for hands and teeth as well as the opening into the gullet.

Most food is detected by sight but the sense of touch plays a very important part among the mudfeeders such as snipe and woodcock.

The sense of smell is not used much for the detection of food. Take vultures who live principally on foul smelling carion depend on

7 sight to locate its food.

Looking backward, consider the whole matter of food of birds physiologically. The food consists of carbohydrates, fats, proteins and vitamins. It is all for growth repair, storage and direct combustion.