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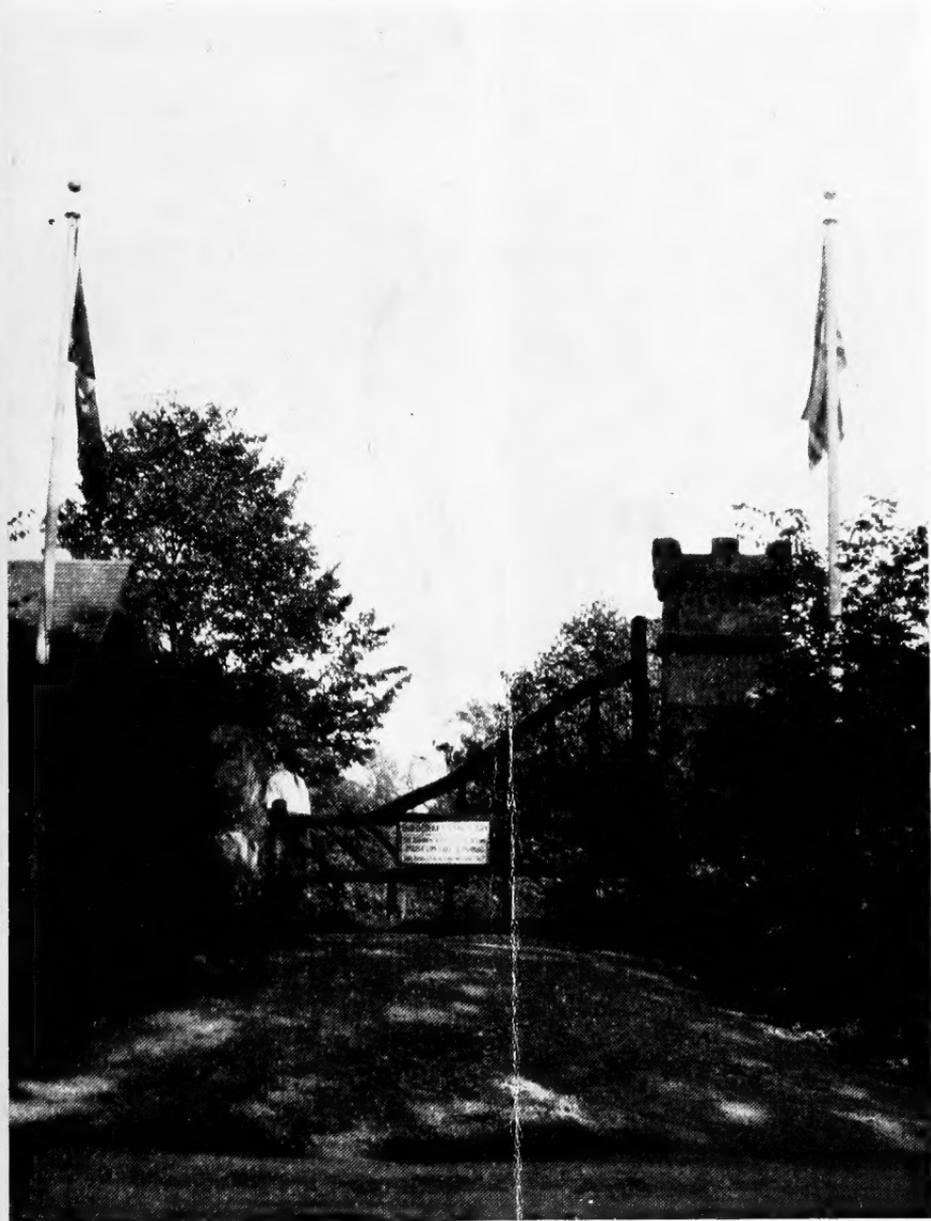
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# The Story of Birdcraft Sanctuary





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# The Making of Birdcraft Sanctuary

By MABEL OSGOOD WRIGHT

With photographs by the author and Wilbur F. Smith

WHILE there is nothing new in the idea of song-bird protection by individuals, the setting apart of spaces of land wherein they may find *Sanctuary*, in the medieval sense of the word, is distinctly novel. The Song Bird Sanctuary is an oasis in a desert of material things. In it the bird may lead its own life for that life's sake, and the joy of many of such lives overflows all arbitrary boundaries in its ethical benefits to the community and state.

There have always been places where a certain amount of protection was accorded to song birds. Also, since the firm establishment of the present Audubon Movement by William Dutcher (who must always be regarded as its patron saint, because it was the vital spark of his practical enthusiasm that kept the smouldering fire from extinguishment until it was fairly swept into its present flame by Gilbert T. Pearson), more than one cooperative isle of bird safety has been established, notably that under charge of the Meriden (New Hampshire) Bird Club.

This Sanctuary was brought into prominence by the masque *Sanctuary*, written by Percy Mackaye, acted for the first time within the grove that was its inspiration and, later, in New York, where its allegory of the evil ways of Stark, the Plume Hunter, and his redemption through the awakening in him of the sense of beauty, gave birth to *Birdcraft Sanctuary* now under consideration. This, in its turn, has the distinction of being the first owned and governed by a State Audubon Society; placed by endowment beyond the vagaries of public caprice, and therefore, from its birth, in a position to work for the highest aims.

"Connecticut must have a Sanctuary and you must make it," said *The Donor* (this being the only name by which the public may know the self-effacing giver), at the close of an evening where a group of Connecticut bird-lovers had enjoyed Mackaye's masque together.

It was a charming thought, but seemed to me rather a part of the evening's illusion than a reality. Yet the next morning,

mail and telephone took a hand, and before a month had passed the dream had a firm footing on earth.

“Have you thought out the land?” asked the first letter. Two tracts came to mind at the call: One, a hundred-acre strip, with a river frontage, four miles back in the hill-country, where rocks, woods, and tangle combined to make what is considered a birds’ paradise. The other, a ten-acre bit of old pasture, where calves and colts had held sway for years. Not many trees had it but those few were great oaks, pepperidge, cedars, maples, and black cherries. The rolling ground had a hill covered with trail-



THE ENTRANCE GATE

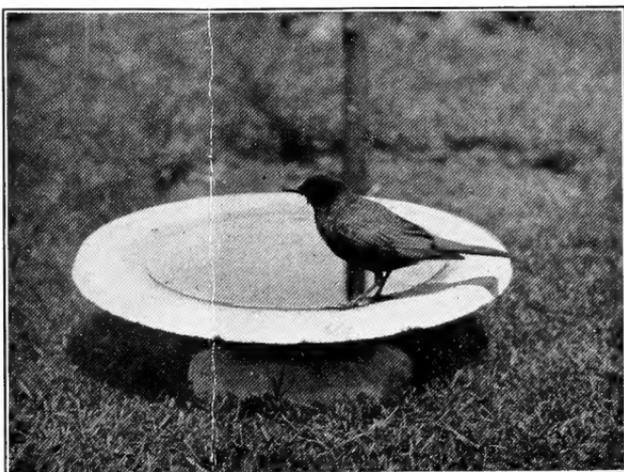
The Warden's Lodge is shown at the left, a part of the Museum at the right.  
The Cat-Warden is on guard in the foreground.

ing wild berries and a low swale broken by spring holes and hedged with the alders that Song Sparrows love, while the variety of wild fruits told that the birds had therein been making a sanctuary for themselves these many years. Moreover, the land was but a ten minutes' walk from trolley, village and railway station, and so near my own home that daily supervision would be possible.

“Buy the ten-acre lot,” called the telephone, “and make the plan of what you think *Birdcraft Sanctuary* (thus The Donor named it after my first bird book) should be. The birds and their comfort should be the first consideration; it must be

a place where they can nest in peace, or rest in their travels. *People must be considered only as they fit in with this scheme.*'

In June, 1914, the legal technicalities having been duly safeguarded, the property was deeded to the State of Connecticut, the control being vested in a Board of Governors, chosen in the first place from its Executive Committee, then self perpetuating.



BIRD BATH

Photographed by Wilbur F. Smith

The list of requirements, considered from both the practical and the ethical sides, read thus: A cat-proof fence to surround the entire place. That it may not look aggressive, it should be set well inside the picturesque old wall. Stone gateposts and a rustic gate at the entrance on the highway. A bungalow for the caretaker, wherein there shall be a room for the meetings of the Society's Executive Committee and Board. A tool and workshop of corresponding style. Several rustic shelters and many seats.

The assembling of the various springs into a pond, so designed as to make an island of a place where the Redwings may nest.

Trails to be cut through the brush and turf grass, and a charming bit of old orchard on the hill-top, to be restored for the benefit of worm-pulling Robins.

Several stone basins to be constructed for bird-baths, houses to be put up of all sorts, from Wren boxes, von Berlepsch model, Flicker and Owl boxes to a Martin hotel; and lastly, the supplementing of the natural growth by planting pines, spruce, and hemlocks for windbreaks, and mountain ash, mulberries, sweet cherries, flower-

ing shrubs and vines for berries and Hummingbird honey.

The various estimates for the proper doing of the work accompanied the list, which was promptly returned with "O. K., begin at once" written across it. Immediately the work began with the cat-proof fence.

As the scheme became known, there were many queries as to the suitability of the spot for bird homes. The casual observer, for some occult reason, associates the deep woods with bird life, when, in reality, aside from birds of prey and perhaps a dozen species beside, the great bulk of song birds prefer open or partly brushed fields edged by tall trees, with water close at hand, and not too far from human habitations; for, in spite of everything, they seem instinctively to trust to man rather than to their wild enemies. Such a spot was Birdcraft, even before the protecting fence of wire-netting, capped by spreading arms with barbed claws, was built about it.

The bird-sown trees, shrubs, and plants listed during the summer of preparation were as follows: Red, white and pin oaks, red cedar, mulberry, several hundred bird cherry trees, ungrafted sweet cherries, high and low bush blackberries, dewberries, thimble berries, strawberries, huckleberries, blueberries, and black and red chokeberries; staghorn and glabrous sumachs, Virginia creeper, wild grapes of three species, bayberry, wild plum, shad bush, wild smilax of two species (Mohawk briar), elderberries, prickly pear, three species of wild roses, sweetbriar, great clumps of the alder bushes haunted by Song Sparrows in late winter and early spring for their sweet cone seeds, and last, meshing everything with its half-evergreen vines, were masses of Japanese honeysuckle, seeming to thrive even upon the thin soil between the rock ledges.

Trail-making was the first actual work done on the land itself. This required skill in knowing what not to do, and in keeping the lay of the land in mind, so that the paths would have meaning, and not simply intersect the place at regular intervals like the plotting out of city lots. Cow-paths are usually safe guides,—they always lead either to or from something and never turn abruptly. So, keeping this in mind, The Commuter, who knew the old pasture well, and our County Game Warden, evolved a sort of game of "follow the leader." One tramped through the brush carrying a large ball of thin cord, while the other followed, knotting the slack of the string to the bushes as he passed. The natural swing of the body in taking the hills



THE POND AND AN OBSERVATION SHELTER

Photographed by Wilbur F. Smith

kept the curves true, and made the cutting of the trails a matter of patience, a brush hook, stub scythe, pruning-knife and shears—that is, patience, plus the intelligence that knew just how much of the fringed edge to spare. It was in the exercise of this intelligence on the part of a man who had come as a day worker, owing to the closing down of a shop in a nearby town, that ended in the enlargement and altering of our whole plan of work for Birdcraft Sanctuary. Having once set his foot on the trail, we found not only that he understood what we wished to accomplish, but that he was a bird-man, a sportsman of field experience, and a taxidermist also. How this suggested new work will be told later; sufficient to say that, instead of the caretaker

of our first plan, we have a warden who keeps a day-book of all happenings, and records migrants and nesting residents, is a sure shot of cats, and looks out in all ways for bird welfare.

The bungalow, begun in July, 1914, was ready for occupancy by the middle of September.

Stones were gathered about the grounds to build a great fireplace in the committee-room, and also for the gateposts. The latter were adapted by the Commuter from the design of a cathedral tower; the rose-windows in the original being replaced by nesting-holes in the taller post, while the font-like cap of the shorter post made a shallow bathing-place for small birds, that was immediately appropriated by Wrens and Song Sparrows. The gate, as well as the pergola porch of the bungalow, was made of rough-hewn chestnut, the better to hold the fingers of the vines with which in time the porch will be covered.

Even before the cat-proof (is there such a thing?) fence was begun, it seemed to us that here, as everywhere, the cat would be the chief problem for, in spite of the presence of large bodies of workmen, the place seemed the hunting ground for all the cats of the township.

August was given to pond-making. By the first of October, it was hard to believe that the pond had been "made" in any way—so natural did it seem,—and one of its early records is that of a visit from a Black-bellied Plover.

On October 16, Birdcraft Sanctuary was opened to the public, by holding there the afternoon session of the Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Audubon Society.

We had thought, aside from making it a haunt for birds, of the Sanctuary ultimately as a place for holding of bird classes, a haunt for bird photographers, and a general gathering ground for nature-loving children. One month, a mid-autumn month at that, caused us to change our whole plan of action.

When guests were numerous, even the migrants vanished. Many children wished to see birds, probably, when they came, but did not like the watching-and-waiting process, and found a game of hide-and-seek in and out of the feeding-shelters, one of which is like a tepee, much more interesting. Inside of a month, the visitors lacked but a few of being one thousand. What would happen under such conditions in the spring, when the outing fever lays hold upon the world?

The Governors met in a depressed conclave and decided that admission to the *Sanctuary* must be by card, and that the requirements for the holders of such cards must be some sort of qualification other than the desire to go on an excursion. Also an official photographer, Willbur F. Smith, was appointed from our own number to keep the picture record of all happenings of



THE WINTER BIRD-LIFE GROUP IN THE MUSEUM

Background painted by Charlotte Alvord Lacey

importance. The experience of that first month taught us a valuable lesson, which it will be well for all overzealous bird students to consider.

All through the autumn, people, old and young, brought us birds that they had picked up dead, having been killed by electric wires, being blown against windows, etc., and begged to know their names and something about them. This is only a partial list of the species brought in during less than a month: Prairie

Warbler, Olive-backed and Hermit Thrushes, Northern Water Thrush, White-throated, Chipping and Savannah Sparrows, Myrtle Warblers in numbers, Golden-crowned Kinglets, an Acadian Owl, Screech Owls in the red, gray, and intermediate phases, Woodcock, Purple Finch, Purple Finches, Flickers, a Bay-breasted Warbler, a Blackpoll and, on the first of January, a Great Blue Heron, that was so weak from cold and hunger that, in spite of being housed and fed upon smelts, it died on January 4.

We began at once to keep a list of the birds and the names of those who found them. The Warden mounted all the specimens that were in good condi-

tion, and we decided to form a small collection of local birds for study and exhibition, and to keep them in bookcases in our committee-room. The Warden already possessed a fair collection of game birds and birds of prey.

Why not have a little museum of our own, we asked, where the birds that are picked up may be augmented by those to be obtained by exchange or gift, for we would not have anything "collected" specially for our use.



A FLICKER'S NESTING STUB

We planned a single-room building similar to the bungalow, 25 x 16 feet, open rafters to be of stained wood, the room lined with cases wherein the smaller birds might be grouped against seasonal backgrounds, while the larger Ducks, birds of prey, etc., could be shown upon rafters or case tops.

The accessories and foregrounds could be largely gleaned from wood, shore, and fields; the chief difficulty would be in securing proper painted backgrounds and the blending of the whole.

Again *The Donor* said "Go on," and the Museum building, begun in late November of 1914, was opened to the public the Monday after Easter, 1915. Between that time and July 1, the date on which I am writing, 1,300 people, not few of them professionals in bird study, have

come and expressed themselves as more than satisfied. Two hundred school children visited Birdcraft Museum on Arbor and Bird Day alone.

The work of making this little museum was so absorbing that the three months spent upon it passed as only one (at first it seemed that many seasons must pass before we could make a showing), but having obtained from the State and Game Commission the necessary permit to maintain a Museum, we begged absolutely without shame, and received such generous response from Dr. Jonathan Dwight, Jr., Mr. William Brewster, and The Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge, that there was no need for delay.

Of course there were some difficulties. Having arranged for five picture cases—Winter, Early Spring blending into Summer, Summer, Autumn on the Bay, and the Sportsman's



HOUSE WREN IN A VON BERLEPSCH BOX

Photographed by Wilbur F. Smith

Corner,—the greatest trouble was to have the painting done according to the scenes as we knew them and that shone so plainly in the mind's eye. But like true New Englanders, we fell back on our resources, and one of the Governors, Miss



A WINTER FEEDING STATION

Charlotte A. Lacey, with the instinct of color came to our rescue, and accomplished Winter, Summer, and The Sportsman's Corner. So competent a critic as Mr. Chapman has selected Winter for reproduction here, as he feels that it is truly representative of the desired conditions. This is the brief record of the Birdcraft's beginning.

## Birdcraft Sanctuary

(EDITORIAL BY FRANK M. CHAPMAN IN BIRDLORE)

A visit to Birdcraft Sanctuary has so impressed us with its possibilities that we cannot resist the impulse to add a word to the account of this unique undertaking which Mrs. Wright gives on a preceding page. While this sanctuary has been developed primarily as a refuge for wild birds, a local museum and a home for the State Audubon Society, it is chiefly valuable to our mind as an object lesson in conservation and museum methods.

As a "museum man" we have had constantly before us for the past 25 years the problem of conveying a knowledge of bird life to the public through the exhibition of specimens. In the light of this experience we do not hesitate to say that, in its own field of local bird life, Birdcraft Sanctuary promises to render a greater and more effective return for the capital invested than can be shown by any other museum in this country. We cannot say by any similar institution, *for we know of none like it.*

Combined with a museum, which contains an exhibit designed to interest the casual observer by its attractiveness, as well as to fill the wants of the students, we have an outdoor Aviary walled only by a protecting fence and roofed by the sky, where many of the birds examined in the museum cases may be seen and heard in a series of natural Habitat Groups which no preparator may hope to equal. And both in-door and out-door exhibits are under the constant care of a Curator-Warden ready to supply information in a way with which no printed label can ever compete—so much more convincing is the spoken word than the printed word. Ten acres cannot harbor many birds nor a little museum in the country be seen by a large number of people—as figures go now-a-days but the idea which they embody can reach to the ends of the earth. So we repeat our belief that Birdcraft Sanctuary will eventually give refuge to birds on many thousand acres and the beauty and value of bird-life to many generations of bird students.

(From Birdlore, Aug. 1915)

## Three Years After — 1918

SOME NOTES ON BIRDCRAFT SANCTUARY

By MABEL OSGOOD WRIGHT

At the public opening of Birdcraft Sanctuary, over three years ago, enthusiasm there was and much praise for all the details of construction, but certain ultra-practical folk put the question, "Exactly what do you expect to accomplish in these ten acres that may not be compassed in any similar piece of ground, without so much preparation and expense?" Also, "Will not the nearby public in a short time tire of the limited museum exhibit and cease to come?"

To both these queries the answer was "We shall see; time only can prove."

It did not take us long to find that the general public can best be taught to name the birds accurately from seeing them at close range in the museum, for it requires a special aptitude to group markings and color scheme as shown in a fitting wild bird, even when seen through a field-glass.

But when half a dozen birds are studied at short range through the picture groups in the cases, the novice has a series for mental comparison out-of-doors.

Straightway we added a second unit to the museum, to carry out in greater detail the seasonal scheme of the first room.

In the second unit there are three large groups: (1) Gulls, Ducks and other Shore-birds of the New England coast. (2) A wood scene, with perspective glimpses of hills and meadows, against which are grouped many birds of prey and the chief mammals of Connecticut, shown because of the relation of some to the destruction of game-birds, (i. e. a gray fox is shown stalking some Quail while the fox cub in its den is nosing the remains of a Ruffed Grouse, etc.) (3) A picture of the Sanctuary itself is used to show all the birds that have either nested therein, rested there during the migration, or been its winter guests. The value of this group is to show students the scope of bird-life that may be found in the neighborhood, as the records kept by the warden place the display upon a scientific basis and eliminate anything like guess-work. This 3rd picture



OLD ORCHARD FROM THE OVERLOOK

Photographed by Wilbur F. Smith

having served its purpose has been replaced by a meadow group.

The arrangement of our little museum aims at doing away with the confusion that falls upon the amateur when visiting great collections, for we limit ourselves to birds common to Connecticut, and, in addition to the picture groups, we are developing three "study cases" wherein the birds are shown in pairs, or male, female and immature, and plainly labeled.

Have people tired of this exhibit? No. Those who came at first from mere curiosity, came again with interested friends. Teachers make visits a reward of merit for their Junior Classes, and automobilists leave the post-road to "take in Birdcraft." Our last annual record of visitors was 6,200 people, a small number for a city museum, but very significant for a rural, cottage affair. The use of the ground inside the so-called cat-proof fence is confined to Members of the Conn. Audubon Society and accredited adult bird-students admitted by card.

One hundred and thirty birds killed by natural causes have been brought in by children. Permission having been given us by the State Commission of Fish and Game to retain these birds, they were mounted by the warden, for the museum, and duplicates kept as "skins" for exchange.

If the great annual loss of bird-life could be more frequently saved from waste by this method, it would be possible to form small collections for school study without taking the life of a single bird.



THE THRASHER ON FEEDING  
SHELF

Photographed by Wilbur F. Smith

Red-shouldered Hawks are always set free when caught, as the warden finds them great destroyers of rodents, and has yet failed to see them harry the birds.

The Northern Shrikes, next to the Sharp-shinned Hawks, have proved the most ruthless harriers of our winter birds in the Sanctuary. They also gave exhibits of their "butcher-bird" habits by impaling victims on the barbs of the fence.



A ROBIN TENANT

Three days after hatching this bird lost his wife and thereafter raised the brood alone

Photographed by Wilbur F. Smith

Valuable and precise data on the cat question has been collected during these three years, when 107 cats have been taken in the enclosed grounds of Birdcraft, 24 having worked their way between the barbs and over the top of the "cat-proof" fence! While 50 of these cats might be classed as homeless wanderers, the others were well-fed adult cats in whom the bird-hunting instinct was so dominant that they would take great risks to

satisfy it. This type of cat, together with Crows, we are convinced, causes quite as great losses to bird and poultry-raisers as all the Hawks combined.

It can be easily seen that by feeding and housing more than an average number of birds in a given area, their natural enemies are attracted and increased, so that it is of little avail to create a so-called Sanctuary unless constant protection from a resident warden is supplied.

In addition to general supervision, our warden makes his rounds early in the morning and at twilight, on the lookout for unusual happenings and new arrivals. Predacious mammals, and the like, must be looked for and trapped.

One lesson can be learned through our experience by those wishing to put up bird-houses—do not place them at random or too near together as if your garden was a salesroom. With a few gregarious exceptions, birds like privacy, and one house should not be within sight of another. Then, too, the houses of simplest construction find the readiest tenants. A long, squared box with the proper opening at top and a few chips and shavings inside will suit a Flicker or Screech Owl as well as the elaborate von Berlepsch construction, proving that American birds, like American people, adapt themselves to all conditions.

We have found a double reason for cleaning out bird-boxes during the winter. In half a dozen cases the white-footed or deer mouse has made a soft nest in them, and in one Wren box a family of ten was wintering. This house and contents, carefully mounted, is an object of interest in one of our study cases.



GREAT-CRESTED FLYCATCHER  
AND ITS NESTING BOX

Photographed by Wilbur F. Smith

Among the notable birds that have adopted our home-made houses is the Great-crested Fly-catcher, who is quite at home in a decayed apple stub with a bark roof.

A natural brush-heap, supplemented from time to time, is particularly attractive to the Brown Thrashers, who are fast becoming regular visitors to the feeding-shelf in spite of alleged shyness. A pair of Thrashers made up their mind to winter with us. The female succumbed after Christmas, during the first zero weather, but the male lived on, roosting in some salt hay that packed pipes under the north porch, feeding upon



ACADIAN OWL

Photographed by Wilbur F. Smith

cornbread, meat-scraps, and the like and sunning every day under the shelter of a bank.

On Monday, April 1, he began to sing in a broken fashion, while on the 10th he burst into *full song!* This seems to me an important record, as the migrant Thrashers are not due until the last week of April and rarely sing until May 1.

During the winter six Acadian Owls were recorded. One was picked up in a half-frozen state and after being thawed out, was put in a cage and fed with pieces of English Sparrows and Starlings that the warden had caught for it. After a time the cage was placed in the cellar, which is light and above freezing temperature. The Owl was let fly about, so that it might keep its wing action until the weather was mild enough to liber-



WARDEN MOWING A TRAIL THROUGH A THICKET OF PINK  
STEEPLE BUSH

Photographed by Wilbur F. Smith

ate it safely. The cellar had been overrun with meadow mice and white-foots. Suddenly the warden discovered that the little Acadian was catching them as cleverly as the most experienced



THE REDWING'S ISLAND

Photographed by Wilbur F. Smith

cat or human mouse-catcher. In a short time the cellar was entirely cleaned and when the Owl was set free in March, he had paid well for his board and lodging.

The having of a bird student and taxidermist as warden in Birdcraft makes it a gathering-place for those who have tales to tell of their local experiences, and allows these stories either to be proven by him or disproved with authority. This also helps the warden to keep in touch with local bird-life through the specimens brought in for mounting and he is able to control, in a measure, illegal shooting by refusing to mount the specimens shot and reporting them to the county warden.

As an instance of establishing a local record—word was brought to him during the January zero weather that from



ONE PIPE FOR TWO.—A CHICKADEE SHARES THE WARDEN'S CORN-COB

Photographed by Wilbur F. Smith

three to five Wilson's Snipe were living in a marsh meadow one-fourth of a mile away. The first impulse was to laugh at the report, but as the boy's story was backed up by others, our warden went to investigate. The Snipe were there and a record established, the secret of the open bit of marsh being the exhaust-steam pipe from a nearby factory which kept open ground for the Snipe through this bitter winter.

First and last, Birdcraft is proving itself a place to answer truly the questions of the bird-lover and student, questions asked both by eye and tongue, and to help its visitors think for themselves. Is not this "making good"?

Little by little native butterflies and moths will appear in the study case and some of the vanishing wild flowers find their natural habitats in the Sanctuary, so that the economic relation between flowers, insects, and birds, may be made plain, but this will be another story. Nature's plan is eternity!



CATBIRD ON NEST

Photographed by Wilbur F. Smith



PHOTOGRAPHING A ROBIN TENANT

Photographed by Wilbur F. Smith



A CHRISTMAS SHEAF FOR THE JUNCOS AND TREE SPARROWS

## March 1st, 1922

This date finds Birdcraft Museum practically completed, in accordance with its original plan to exhibit the birds that may be seen in Connecticut during the year.

Units Nos. 1 and 2, built by the Founder, showing the birds in habitat groupings have been supplemented by a third section, The Study Room, wherein duplicates of the birds in the picture groups—male and female, plainly marked with their authentic names—may be seen at close range. A copy of the Check List for the American Ornithologist Union (The A. O. U. so-called) is at hand for those who wish to place the birds according to Origin and Species and become familiar with the Latin names. The material for this room has been drawn from several museums and the work of mounting and placing the birds will soon be completed.

This unit, through the enterprise of a member of the Board of Governors, was built by friends who fully appreciate Birdcraft Sanctuary as an influence for good in the state.

. . . 1927 . . .

## A New Responsibility

The fact that a piece of ground has been set apart for a song bird Sanctuary, from its very inception places a sort of rotary responsibility upon its managers to keep the place true to its name.

In the beginning cats and predacious Hawks headed the list of undesirables, for this gathering place of birds was like passing word that here was a market place where food might be had for the catching. Then other birds than Hawks when judged at close range in a space of ten acres were found undesirable—at least in the nesting season—Blue Jays, Grackles, Screech Owls and Crows, while the wandering Shrikes of winter proved a menace to the residents and confiding visitors at the feeding stations, even those under shelter of the porches.

Turtles would seem to be harmless in a Bird Sanctuary and lent added interest to the pond when the several species sunned themselves on the log anchored among the lily pads, but what happened? The wild Mallards brought out a sturdy brood, but one by one they began to disappear; as the water was an unlikely hunting place for cats and the reeds and overhanging shrubs offered protection from Hawks—what?

The warden watched and soon discovered that the larger turtles, coming silently from below, caught the ducklings by the legs, pulled them down, drowned them and afterward ate such portions as they wished! Exit turtles! Always to be on guard and yet always just to the rights of the destroyer has proved no light responsibility.

One thing, however, is certain; in some mysterious way word of our Sanctuary has spread among the wild folk, so that an alien tribe has, within the year, claimed its protection as a dwelling place rather than as a market. In spite of its nearness to railway, high school and surrounding houses Reynard the Fox has climbed the prickly fence and established himself so craftily that a brood of cubs, beautiful as young collies, has resulted. Traps are unavailing and while three adults and a cub

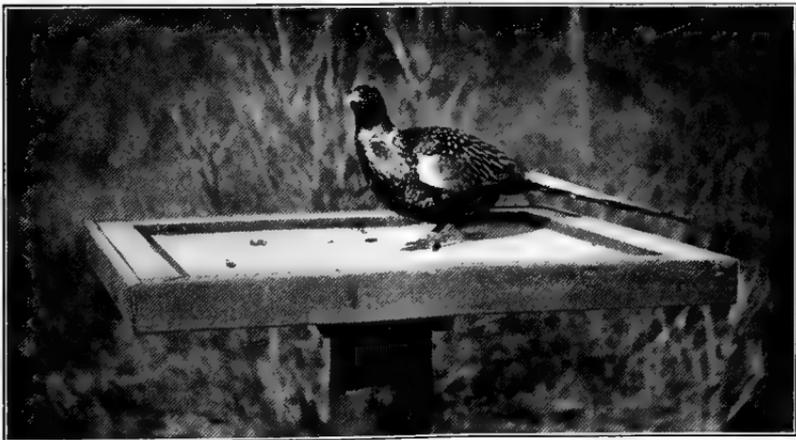




GOOD HUNTING

have been shot and a clever old fox hound introduced to trail the quarry increased the kill to eight before the end was sighted. As far as can be known they have gone outside for their maintenance with real cleverness and one might almost say consideration, for such feathered remains as have been found were of *Rhode Island Red Fowls*, while the warden's poultry are *Plymouth Rocks!* Yet the number of the nests of low building birds was found to be less at the season's end. Of course we must rout these foxes, even if only for the sake of the neighborhood, yet I must confess to a feeling of admiration for their seeking the Sanctuary and their pluck in remaining. If only we might make a treaty with them by which they might be sworn in as Anti-Cat Police!

M. O. W.



PHEASANT ON FEEDING SHELF  
Photographed by Wilbur F. Smith

## Twelve Years in Birdcraft Sanctuary

Now that we have begun our thirteenth year in Birdcraft Sanctuary, I have gathered a few facts from my records so that you may judge for yourselves if Birdcraft has been a success.

During the first year we had 16 species of birds nesting and I found a total of 76 nests; during the past year, 1926, we had 32 species nesting and double the number of nests were located.

The visitors during the first year numbered 3,356. Last year there were 10,109, including 49 classes of school children.

Some species of birds have increased in number of nesting pairs, while others have decreased for good and sufficient reasons. English Sparrows, Crows, Starlings, Blue Jays, Screech Owls, Purple Grackles and Sparrow Hawks are not allowed to nest here. While the Screech Owl and Sparrow Hawk are beneficial in open meadows for catching mice, beetles, etc., we have found them very destructive to song birds in the Sanctuary during the nesting season. In 1922 a pair of Screech Owls nested in an old button-ball tree; on the opposite side and about four feet further down, a pair of Flickers nested. Both raised their broods, but later on examining the cavity where the Owls were raised, I found packed inside about nine inches of bones and feathers, chiefly of *song birds!*

Two years later I located another pair, the young were about four days old and in the nest box I found a dead Robin and on the ground under the nest I found three more. That evening I watched for the male Owl. Just at dusk he came to the nest with a freshly killed Downy Woodpecker.

The same has been my experience with the Sparrow Hawk if allowed to nest in the Sanctuary. When mice were scarce they were very destructive to the song birds. One of our most serious problems from the beginning has been keeping down vermin. First and last I consider the cat the worst of all and in spite of careful fencing, 167 have been taken up to date.

Last year we were overrun by rats. In 1923 we had a plague of field mice of which I trapped 271. Crows, Sharp-shinned Hawks, Cooper's Hawks and Shrikes are also classed among the detrimental. I believe that House Wrens in great

number in a small area are also very destructive. For instance we had a pair of Bluebirds nesting in a box under the Museum eaves; a pair of Robins liking the location began to build on the roof of the Bluebirds' house, causing great excitement among the Bluebirds. After pulling the Robins' nest down twice I concluded to let it alone and finally both Bluebirds and Robins brought out their young.

Next year both Bluebirds and Robins returned but the Wrens had increased greatly in number and they also found this location to their taste. I thought at the time that the Wrens drove the Bluebirds away as the Robins again started to build over the Bluebirds' nest. Then noticing that the Robins were excited over something, I kept watch and saw a Wren leaving the Robins' nest carrying an egg which it dropped on the trail. The next day the nest was empty. Since then I have picked up the eggs of the Robin, Bluebird, Song Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Phoebe, Catbird and Wood Thrush, with the two small holes in the side where the Wrens had punctured them with their sharp bills.

Crows, Blue Jays and Grackles are also destructive to the birds that start to nest before the foliage is out, but these latter seem to seek the eggs for food while with the Wren it seems to be a matter purely of destruction.

During the course of the year I have many questions asked of me chief among them being, "Do you find that the same birds return here every year?"

In 1921-1922 I banded a number of birds to find out for myself. This banding was done upon birds, both old and young, that were liberated from the Sparrow trap. (We do not believe in banding nestlings here in the Sanctuary, as it is very difficult to determine the exact time that young birds will leave a nest and promiscuous handling is quite likely to break up a household before the due time.) I found that both adults and young so banded have returned every year.

Juncos and Tree Sparrows that wintered here also returned to their familiar roosting places.

The real surprise to me has been the interest the general public has taken in our Museum—adults, school children, and Boy and Girl Scouts alike. Scout Captains bring their troops here to pass their tests on birds, trees and flowers and by holding their interest we feel that we are making real headway.

One Hundred and Sixty-two species of birds seen in,  
or flying over, the Sanctuary, from 1915 to 1926.

Red-throated Loon	Barred Owl
Herring Gull	Saw-whet Owl
Hooded Merganser	Screech Owl
Mallard Duck	Snowy Owl
Black Duck	Black-billed Cuckoo
Wood Duck	Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Greater Scaup Duck	Kingfisher
Canada Goose	Hairy Woodpecker
American Bittern	Downy Woodpecker
Great White Heron	Sapsucker
Great Blue Heron	Red-headed Woodpecker
Green Heron	Flicker
Black-crowned Night Heron	Whip-poor-will
Woodcock	Night Hawk
Wilson's Snipe	Chimney Swift
Greater Yellow-legs	Hummingbird
Lesser Yellow-legs	Kingbird
Spotted Sandpiper	Great-crested Flycatcher
Least Sandpiper	Phoebe
Black-breasted Plover	Wood Pewee
Semi-palmated Plover	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
Kill-deer Plover	Least Flycatcher
Bob-white	Horned Lark
Ruffed Grouse	Blue Jay
Ring-necked Pheasant	Crow
Mourning Dove	Fish Crow
Marsh Hawk	Starling
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Bobolink
Cooper's Hawk	Cowbird
Goshawk	Red-winged Blackbird
Red-tailed Hawk	Meadow Lark
Red-shouldered Hawk	Orchard Oriole
Broad-winged Hawk	Baltimore Oriole
Bald Eagle	Rusty Blackbird
Duck Hawk	Purple Grackle
Pidgeon Hawk	Bronzed Grackle
Sparrow Hawk	Evening Grosbeak
Osprey	Pine Grosbeak
Long-eared Owl	

Purple Finch	Tennessee Warbler
English Sparrow	Parula Warbler
Am. Crossbill	Cape May Warbler
White-winged Crossbill	Yellow Warbler
Redpoll	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Goldfinch	Myrtle Warbler
Pine Siskin	Magnolia Warbler
Snow Bunting	Chestnut-sided Warbler
Vesper Sparrow	Bay-breasted Warbler
Savannah Sparrow	Black-poll Warbler
Sharp-tailed Sparrow	Blackburnian Warbler
White-crowned Sparrow	Black-throated Green Warbler
White-throated Sparrow	Pine Warbler
Tree Sparrow	Yellow Palm Warbler
Chipping Sparrow	Prairie Warbler
Junco	Ovenbird
Field Sparrow	Water Thrush
Song Sparrow	Louisiana Water Thrush
Swamp Sparrow	Maryland Yellow Warbler
Fox Sparrow	Yellow-breasted Chat
Towhee	Hooded Warbler
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	Wilson's Warbler
Indigo Bunting	Canadian Warbler
Scarlet Tanager	Redstart
Purple Martin	Mockingbird
Cliff Swallow	Catbird
Barn Swallow	Brown Thrasher
Tree Swallow	Carolina Wren
Bank Swallow	House Wren
Rough-winged Swallow	Winter Wren
Cedar Waxwing	Brown Creeper
Northern Shrike	White-breasted Nuthatch
Loggerhead Shrike	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Red-eyed Vireo	Chickadee
Warbling Vireo	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Yellow-throated Vireo	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Blue-headed Vireo	Wood Thrush
White-eyed Vireo	Wilson's Thrush
Black and White Warbler	Gray-cheeked Thrush
Worm-eating Warbler	Olive-backed Thrush
Blue-winged Warbler	Hermit Thrush
Golden-winged Warbler	Robin
Nashville Warbler	Bluebird

## Species Nesting and Number of Nests each Year

	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926
Mallard								2	2			
Quail		1	(Seven young)							1		
Sparrow Hawk						1	2	2	1	2	1	1
Screech Owl			1	2		1		1	1	1		1
Black-billed Cuckoo		2	2	2	2					1	2	1
Yellow-billed Cuckoo									1			1
Downy Woodpecker						1						
Flicker	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	5	4	5	6	5
Chimney Swifts		5	2	3	3	2	3	2	3	5	4	4
Humming Bird				1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Crested Flycatcher	1		1			1	1	1	2	2	1	2
Phoebe		1	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
Wood Pewee		1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	2		1
Blue Jay		1						1	1	1	1	2
Baltimore Oriole					1							
Redwing Blackbird	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1				
Gold Finch	2	2	1	1	1	1	1		1		1	3
Chipping Sparrow		1		3	1				2	3	3	2
Field Sparrow	12	10	10	12	12	14	10	14	7	8	9	7
Song Sparrow	8	14	13	14	15	13	11	9	9	7	8	9
Towhee	1	2	3	1	3	2	2	3	2	3		
Rose-breasted Grosbeak			1		2	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
Cedar Waxwing	2		1	3	1	3	1	1	2	2		
Red-eyed Vireo			2	1	1		1		1	2	1	2
White-eyed Vireo							1		1	1	1	2
Md. Yellow-throat	2	3	3	1	5	4		1	5	6	4	5
Blue-winged Warbler	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	2
Yellow Warbler	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Yellow-breasted Chat	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Catbird	10	7	9	11	13	15	11	14	15	11	14	17
Brown Thrasher	5	5	5	7	7	8	7	10	8	7	7	9
House Wren	12	14	13	13	17	18	16	21	23	27	19	14
White-breasted Nuthatch							1				1	1
Wood Thrush				1	2	2	1	1	5	4	5	6
Robin	14	19	22	25	25	23	24	21	15	14	12	11
Bluebird		3	2	4	5	5	3	6	4	5	5	4
Pheasant				1	1	3	3	2	1	1		
Chestnut-sided Warbler								1		1		1
Mourning Dove								1	4	5	5	11
Purple Grackle									3			
Indigo Bunting												1
Total No. Nests	76	99	101	117	130	131	112	129	129	135	119	133
No. Species nesting	16	22	24	26	27	27	28	29	32	32	27	32

# Birdcraft Sanctuary

UNQUOWA ROAD, FAIRFIELD, CONN.

Founded in 1914, and given to

THE AUDUBON SOCIETY, STATE OF CONNECTICUT, BY  
MISS ANNIE BURR JENNINGS

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*The Founding Board of Governors*

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*Later Additions*

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EDUARD F. VON WETTBERG  
MRS. EDUARD F. VON WETTBERG  
JOHN P. HOLMAN  
(President of the Audubon Society, State of Connecticut)

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*Planned, and the Construction Directed by*

MR. AND MRS. JAMES OSBORNE WRIGHT

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*Paintings in Birdcraft Museum by*

MISS C. A. LACEY

---

*Warden and Taxidermist*

FRANK NOVAK







Photographed by Wilbur F. Smith



