

May-June 1960

## BLACK OR STRIPED SUNFLOWER SEEDS EQUALLY GOOD AS BAIT

By Merrill Wood

An experiment was begun on July 1, 1959 and run until December 27, 1959, during which time 157 days were used to test the preference of wild birds for two varieties of sunflower seeds, the all-black or African and the striped or mammoth Russian. Three identical Geoffrey Gill end-opening trip-step traps were kept on a wooden platform elevated five feet above ground in the author's back yard in State College, Pa. One trap was baited with black seeds, one with striped seeds, and one was kept empty for a control. To prevent the location of the trap from being a factor, the traps were rotated daily at 5 P.M. so that the sequence was BLACK-STRIPED-CONTROL, or CONTROL-BLACK-STRIPED, or STRIPED-CONTROL-BLACK. On the 31st of each month traps were kept closed. The traps with seeds were kept supplied with an equal amount (35 grams or 3 ounces) and seeds in the same condition. The total amount of sunflower seeds used in this test was two pounds of each variety.

The seed-eaters, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Cardinal and Evening Grosbeak ate both varieties and did not show any preference for either. A total of 121 individuals of these species were caught. Other species taken in this experiment, and not showing any preference, were Bluejay, House Wren, Carolina Wren, Starling, House Sparrow, Slate-colored Junco and Song Sparrow.

The black sunflower seeds had one undesirable feature, that being, when wet they gave off a purple stain.

State College, Pennsylvania

?

\*\*\*

Drawing  
By  
Dorothy  
Bordner

