

practically the same surroundings we had found them in before, an open hillside of briars and second growth, ground that had been cleared years before and allowed to grow up again, facing the south.

We moved on probably two miles in the same range of hills and stopped along the road in a cool shady place for lunch. In the trees and bushes all around us were singing Prairie Warblers, dozens of them, on the same kind of a hillside, except probably a few larger trees. Prairie Warblers, instead of being strangers in this part of the state suddenly became common. But no where else have we ever seen the Prairie Warbler. If any of the readers of this magazine should know of their nesting in Ohio we would be pleased to know of it.

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THE MEADOWLARK AS A CONVERSATIONALIST

The first thing one usually notices about a bird is its notes, plumage or a peculiar habit. These things take first place in memory. A bird's song is frequently its most prominent and pleasing characteristic, and were it not for it a great many birds would never be noticed by the majority of people.

Much has been written in praise of America's bird singers; some poets and authors praise one bird, while others laud another. In my estimation the Meadowlark and certain members of the Thrasher family rank very near first as singers, but I am unable to say which is really the best. However, I believe the Meadowlark's song is the most appreciated, for he comes early in the spring, when there are few birds with us, and it is very doubtful whether any of the later birds can equal his song in either quality or variety.

A study of the Meadowlark's musical vocabulary is a very fascinating one and does not require a great deal of effort, providing, of course, one lives near a region of prairie land within the Meadowlark's range. In the spring months go to a sizable meadow, or better, to a slough where slough grass and other vegetation grow in rank profusion. It is here the Meadowlark is found. If you are a farmer and your work lies nearby, you are indeed fortunate, for several weeks may be profitably spent in such a location before all of the Meadowlarks' songs will be heard.

The Meadowlark is a great conversationalist. He talks to you from morning till night; it matters not what the weather—storm and sunshine are the same. He sings from tree, ground, or in the air, but a fence post, when available, seems to be his favorite perch. Except in infrequent cases, every Meadowlark

seems to have but one song (at least for one day), which he repeats at short intervals throughout the spring months. However, in a large field one can hear a dozen Larks all singing a different tune at the same time.

Now if we were to take these songs, put them together, and assume that they were given by one bird we would have quite an interesting one-sided conversation. It would run something like this: We see the Meadowlark standing on a post repeating, "*Oh, yes, I am a pretty-little-bird*" (the "*pretty-little-bird*" winds up with a trill). In a moment he says, "*I'm-going to-eat pretty-soon.*" Then, suiting the action to the word, he drops out of sight into the grass, and presently we hear him say, "*I cut 'im clean off, I cut 'im clean off*" (this is often followed by "*Yup*"). He flies back to his perch with a bug in his bill, and when he has deliberately eaten it, he—in a fast, sing-song and unmusical voice—says, "*It makes me feel very good.*" From another portion of the field a voice calls, "*Hey, come here, you red-headed Coolie!*" It is probably the irate "Mrs." After hastily cautioning us, "*You needn't shoot my brother Bill,*" the hen-pecked (we imagine) husband flies away with a sputtering note, leaving us with a good opinion of his work as a bug destroyer and musician.*

The average bird's song is given so rapidly and is of such a bird-like quality that an attempt to put it into words is quite impossible if the writer would have his readers understand them as he writes them. With the Meadowlark it is different; the notes are given plainly and with about the same speed as the human voice talks, so are easily put into words.

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ARE BIRDS WEATHER PROPHETS?

In looking through an old record book, I found a curious note about birds oiling their feathers before a storm. It is of an interrogative nature, and I pass it on to the reader with the hope that it will at least be of interest, even though no conclusions are reached.

It seems I had heard some one say that birds were endowed with remarkable powers of observation, could tell when a storm was approaching, and had forethought enough to use their secretion of oil on their feathers to make them more waterproof. This wierd and, as perhaps I should say, unreasonable story, interested me. One lady told me that she had watched Mourning Doves industriously oil their coats before a mid-summer rain, but further

* Many other phrases are in common use with Meadowlarks, but the ones given above are the ones most frequently heard and easily understood.