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I. Dickey Birds

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I. Dickey Birds

23 Jan. 72
Pittsburg Headlight-Sun
Kenneth L. Simons' column

This is an old English name for any of a rather large number of small birds which one may notice around the yard, or in the field or woods. There are so many kinds, some of which look somewhat similar to each other, and many of them rather difficult to see well, that it is easier just to call them all dickey birds and let it go at that.

But when ^{WANTS-TO-KNOW} ~~Master Curiosity~~ does see one of those birds well, especially if there is a winter feeder just outside of the window, he is sometime surprised to find that some of them are quite colorful, well marked and distinctive, and he ~~is~~ quickly asks, "What Bird is That?"

Then, if he gets a bird book with all the colored pictures, ^{WANTS-TO-KNOW} ~~Master Curiosity~~ is easily dismayed to find so many different ~~birds~~ ^{birds}, and he quickly becomes confused as to which of several similar kinds he actually did see from the window.

Fortunately, there are ways of simplifying his dilemma. Of maybe more than three hundred pictures of small birds which he might find in most modern bird books (even those small enough to fit into a pocket, and costing only three or four dollars, more or less),

There are only about thirty which he is likely to see in any single winter day. Then if he knows which thirty they might be, he can forget ^{about} the rest of the three hundred at once.

Of course, this list of thirty will not be the same list in winter as might occur in summer, nor will the list for eastern Kansas be the same as the list in southern Wisconsin, or elsewhere. Naturally, the bird books not only include both summer and winter birds (as well as those which visit only during migrations), but also those found in Maine or Louisiana which do not occur in eastern Kansas. Then there will be a rather long list of those which occur here only rarely, which can also be forgotten about except by the expert.

On the other hand, ^{WANTS-TO-KNOW} ~~Master Curiosity~~ might say, "Oh! But all we ever have are sparrows and starlings." This is probably an indication that he was not watching carefully. Perhaps most of what he sees are "sparrows and starlings", but almost any yard will have eight or ten kinds in a single day if he is ^{watching} ~~looking~~ for a bird which looks different, - especially if there is a little feed (actually water is just as good, sometimes better) for them during the winter.

Probably even the least observant can recognize a few of the most conspicuous kinds, even without a bird book, - for example, the Cardinal.

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But even this one is worth a second check if ~~Wolves-to-Know~~ ~~Winter Curiosity~~ has forgotten, that the female is a soft pinkish brown with a gray face instead of the bright red with a black face of the male. Fortunately, both have the prominent crest to help recognition.

Then there is the Blue Jay with its blue and white coat, also with a prominent crest, which cannot be confused with anything else. These do not show any difference between the sexes; so it doesn't make any difference - (except to another Blue Jay, and probably not even to them during the winter.)

Another easily recognized bird ~~when seen~~ ~~during the winter~~ is the Robin - and we have quite a number of them here with us all winter. These ~~probably~~ are not our summer Robins, which go south to Louisiana and Texas. Our winter Robins are presumed to nest in northern Canada, or even in Alaska, and find our winter weather rather mild. Although their winter plumage looks about as it does during the summer (actually they have a great many more feathers during the winter), the winter Robins are much quieter and more retiring during the cold weather. At this time of year they generally seek shelter in protected thick shrubs or trees instead of hopping around lawns or singing from some tree top. Although the females tend to be a bit duller than the males, and both are duller in the winter than in the spring, still both sexes

Dickey Birds - of -
show the characteristic reddish breast, gray
backs and blackish heads.

Since there are four or five kinds of
woodpeckers here during the winter, let's
consider these separately in another article.