A NEW PLAN FOR BIRD SANCTUARIES ALL OVER AMERICA: BY T. GILBERT PEARSON

America is planning new homes for her birds, homes where they can live with unrestricted freedom, where food and lodging in abundance, and of the best, will be supplied, where bathing pools will be at their service, where blossoming trees will welcome them in the spring and fields of grain in the fall, a silent place where they will bring much joy and contentment.

Throughout this country there is to be a concerted effort to convert the cemeteries, the homes of our dear friends who have gone away, into sanctuaries for the bird life of this land. And what isolated spots could be more welcome to the birds than these places which hold so many sad memories for human beings?

Why should we purchase great bird reserves and spend vast quantities of money in making them habitable for our birds when the little cemeteries of the land so need their presence? And why should not every person who visits so often the green home of mother and father, brother, sister and dear friend, delight in planting the kind of flowers and plants which will woo the birds? Why should there not be a society in every town for beautifying the cemetery for bird occupation?

In reality they would be beautifying it to hold more tenderly and lovingly their own memories and to make a spot more friendly to welcome the sad and the heartbroken. Surely if any place in the world should speak of the resurrection, in whatever form it may come to us, it is the cemeteries of our land. There we should seek lovely bird songs, the nesting of birds, the sight of the little ones preparing for the world in their flight; there we should find all the beautiful flowers and the waving grain which somehow always is associated with the spiritual harvest and should be associated in our minds with comfort and peace as well.

Many of us have felt in the past that we have done much to make "God's acre" beautiful everywhere, in the putting up of monuments, in the planting of evergreens, in the building of vaults, but this is not what we mean today by making a home for the birds. We want it all intimate and friendly and full of color and life.

Not long since, I visited one of the old-time cemeteries which was the pride of the neighboring city. It was indeed a region of beauty to the eye, but to my biased mind there is always
something flat and insipid about a landscape however charming, if as one passes among its beauties there is not borne to the ear the music of singing birds. For my feathered friends I looked and listened. Some English sparrows flew up from the drive and I heard the rusty-hinge squeaks of a small company of purple grackles which were nesting, I suspected, in the pine trees down the slope. But of real cheerful bird-life there was none in this artificially beautified forty acre enclosure. There is no reason to suppose that birds would under normal conditions shun a cemetery any more than does the traditional graveyard rabbit.

It was not fear such as we mortals have which kept the song-birds from this place, it was the work of the living which had driven them away. From one boundary to another there was scarcely a yard of underbrush where a thrasher or chewink might lurk, or in which a vireo or dainty chestnut-sided warbler might hang its nest. There was not a drop of water discoverable, where a bird might slake its thirst. Neither in limb nor bole was there a single cavity where a titmouse, wren or bluebird might construct a bed for its young. There were no fruit-bearing trees to invite the birds in summer. So far as I could see there were no berry-bearing shrubs which birds enjoy nor were there any weed patches to invite the flocks of whitethroats and juncos which come drifting southward with the falling leaves of autumn.

Had my visit to this place been made in April or early May there might have been a different tale to tell. September would also have yielded more birds than June, for those are the seasons when the migrants are with us for a time. It is then that the little voyageurs of the upper air are wont to pause after a night of tiresome flight, and rest for the day in any grove which chances to possess convenient home comforts. They are hurrying on to other lands and do not have time
or opportunity to seek out and use only the most inviting places. It is at these seasons that we sometimes see a rare forest bird hopping among the scraggy limbs of a knotted shade tree along a busy street, but we would never expect to find one of those birds loitering there in June.

Not long ago B. S. Bowdish, a busy New York man, made a careful study of the bird life of St. Paul’s Churchyard in lower New York City. This property is three hundred and thirty-three feet long and one hundred and seventy-seven feet wide. In it there is a large church and also a church school. Along one side surge the Broadway throngs. From the opposite side there comes the roar and rumble of an elevated railway. The area contains, according to Mr. Bowdish, three large, ten medium, and forty small trees. With great frequency for two years, field-glass in hand, he pursued his work of making a bird census of the graveyard. The nest of a native bird rewarded his search, for the place was absolutely destitute of feathered songsters during the late spring and summer, and with a single exception he never found a bird there in winter. In passing, it may be interesting to note that in this noisy, limited area during the periods of migration he discovered three hundred and twenty-eight birds, embracing forty species. The larger cemetery which I visited in June would of course yield a much larger series of birds than this, had observations been made during migration.

Why do not more of the birds which pass in spring tarry in this quiet place for the summer? The answer may be found in the facts stated above. The cemetery has been rendered unattract-
tive to many species by the activities of a mere human committee in charge of the property.

During the season when birds are engaged with their domestic duties they are usually a very wise little people. They know perfectly well whether a region is calculated to provide them with sure and safe nesting sites and whether there is sufficient food and water accessible for their daily wants. A little of this same wisdom on our part and a comparatively small expenditure might make of almost any cemetery a bird paradise. Such places are not usually frequented by men and boys who go afield for the purpose of shooting, which is an important point in the establishment of a bird sanctuary.

There is one great enemy of the birds, however, which must be guarded against—the domestic cat. It is the greatest scourge which civilized man has ever loosened upon small wild life, and in virtually every cemetery in the land, you may find these feline destroyers skulking among the grassy mounds. They pounce upon the old birds that light on the ground in quest of insect food. They note the nest on the swaying branch above, and also seize the fledglings in their initial attempts at flights. A cat has been known to destroy as many as twenty birds in a day. It is as natural for the average healthy cat to hunt as it is for the sparks to fly upward. So if we are going to make a bird sanctuary out of the cemetery, pussy must be excluded from its confines. This may be done effectively by means of a cat-proof fence, or to a large extent, by the help of humane box-traps.

Gunners and cats having been eliminated there are few enemies of birds which need be seriously considered. Bird-catching hawks are not often numerous in the neighborhood of cemeteries. Red squirrels have a wide reputation for pilfering birds’ nests, and if abundant they may constitute a danger of secondary importance.

Properly constructed bird-boxes wisely placed have often proven to be a means of increasing bird-life to a most astonishing degree, and this is absolutely the only means of getting hole-nesting varieties to remain during the summer in the cemetery from which all dead standing wood of every character has been removed. Even the strong-
billed woodpeckers will not abide in a region where the only trees are living ones, unless, perchance, an artificial nest entices the resplendent and dashing flicker to tarry. Many a bluebird with its azure coat gleaming in the sunlight, visits the cemetery in early spring. From perch to perch he flies and in the plaintive notes may be detected the question which every bird asks of its mate, "Where shall we find a place for our nest?"

The bluebird cannot build a cradle of twigs and sticks on some leaf-covered limb or hide it in the long grass of a neglected grave. The only place it knows where baby bluebirds may be safely hatched is in some snug cavity. But in the well-kept cemetery there is no such retreat. The caretaker with his pruning hook and cement has carefully removed such places. So when the roses and lilies bloom, the visitor is deprived of the bluebird's cheery song, for the little fellow and his mate have departed for the neighboring farm where we may find them perhaps in the old apple orchard. A few cents expended for lumber, a very little labor in making a small box to be attached to the side of a tree or erected on a post was all that was needed to keep the bluebirds where they may be seen and enjoyed by hundreds of sorrowing people. In the same way the quiet little wrens, whose loud bursts of song are entirely out of all proportion to the size of the singers, may be attracted in summer to the number of two pairs or more to every acre.

It is a curious fact, of which I believe but little has been written, that birds which build open nests may often be induced to remain in a given locality if attractive nesting material is placed within easy reach. A gentleman residing in one of the Southern States has told me that one of the most effective means which he employed to induce a large colony of herons to nest near him was to haul annually, to his little swamps, many wagon-loads of twigs suitable for nest composition. There was a dearth of such material in this region and the herons greatly profited by his thoughtfulness.

In many a cemetery orioles may be tempted to weave their hanging cradles among the swaying elm limbs, if strings and fragments of brightly colored yarns
are placed where the birds may find them. Baron von Berlepsch, whose experiments in attracting birds to his place in Germany have been widely heralded, found that if the tops of bushes were drawn in closely by means of a wire or cord, the resulting thick mass of leaves and twigs offer such a fine place for concealing nests that few birds can resist the temptation to use them.

Other means of rendering a cemetery alluring to nesting birds will readily present themselves, when one develops an active interest in the subject. It takes only a little thought, a little care, and a little trouble, to make it possible for many birds to nest in a cemetery, and it must be remembered that unless they can nest there, the chances are that no great abundance of bird music will fill the air.

The young of most song-birds are fed to a great extent on the soft larvæ of insects of which there is usually an abundant supply everywhere. Many mother-birds, however, like to vary this animal diet with a little fruit-juice now and then, so it transpires that the ripened pulp of the blackberry, strawberry or mulberry, frequently cheer the spirits of the nestlings. Such fruits in most places are easily grown and for the birds they make a pleasant addition to the menu. In a well-watered territory, birds are always more numerous. You may find a hundred of them along the stream in the valley, to one on the mountain-top. A cemetery undecorated with fountains and through, or near which, no stream flows, is too dry a place for the average bird to risk the exigencies of rearing a family. A few simple and inexpensively constructed fountains or drinking pools will work wonders in the way of attracting birds to waterless territory.

Anyone who takes the trouble to induce wild birds to remain in a cemetery during the summer will, in all probability, feel so abundantly repaid for his labors that there will develop in his mind a strong desire to do what is possible to increase also the numbers of fall migrants and winter visitors. The means of accomplishing these ends are even simpler than those necessary to hold the summer birds. The thoughtless gunner and the marauding cat must still be dealt with, but in addition to keeping at bay these enemies, the one necessary thing to do, is to provide food, either by natural or artificial means. In many graveyards there is considerable un-
occupied space which might well be planted in buckwheat or other small grain. If uncut, the quantities of nourishing food produced will bring together many kinds of grain-eating birds.

There are numbers of native shrubs and bushes which grow berries that birds will come far to gather. Look over the following list which Frederick H. Kennard of Newton Center, Massachusetts, has recommended and see if you do not think many of them would be decorative additions to the cemetery. Surely some of them are equal in beauty to many of the shrubs usually planted and they have the added value of furnishing birds with wholesome food. Here is part of Mr. Kennard’s list: shad bush, blue-, gray-, silky- and red-osier cornels, dangleberry, hackleberry, inkberry, black alder, bayberry, shining-, smooth- and staghorn-sumachs, large-flowering currant, thimbleberry, blackberry, elder, snowberry, dwarf bilberry, blueberry, black haw, hobble bush, and arrow-wood. In the way of fruit-bearing shade trees, he recommends: sugar maple, flowering dogwood, white- and cockspur-thorn, native red mulberry, tupelo, black cherry, choke cherry, and mountain ash. For the same purpose he especially commends the planting of the following vines: Virginia creeper, bull beaver, frost grape and fox grape.

Such shrubs and bushes are usually well stripped of their berries after the first heavy snowfall. Then is the time to begin feeding birds in earnest. The more food wisely placed where the birds can get it, the more birds you will surely have in winter. Seeds and grain with a judicious mixture of animal fat, is the best possible ration for the little feathered pilgrims. Rye, wheat, sunflower seed and cracked corn mixed together in equal parts and accompanied with a liberal sprinkling of ground suet and beef-scrap, makes an excellent food for birds at this season. This may be placed on shelves attached to trees or buildings, or on oil-cloth spread on the snow, or on the ground from which the snow has been scraped. On one occasion the writer attracted many birds by the simple means of providing them with finely pounded fresh
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beef-bones. Furnishing food of this character might well be made a pleasant and profitable duty of the children who attend Sunday school in many a rural church.

Why should we not make a bird sanctuary of every cemetery in America? Why leave the cemetery to the English sparrow and the grackles, when the bluebird and the thrush are within hail and eager to come if the hand of invitation be but extended?

The National Association of Audubon Societies has issued an illustrated publication entitled "Bulletin Number 1. Attracting Birds About the Home." This will be found to contain much advice, useful to those interested in the subject of increasing bird-life. Usually a small fee is charged for this bulletin, but for the present a copy will be sent free to any reader of The Craftsman who may forward a two cent stamp to cover the postage. Letters should be sent to the writer at nineteen seventy-four Broadway, New York City.

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If you love your friend better than your friend loves you,
Do not grieve with the pain of pride!
Know yourself fortunate.
You are the happier of the two.
For it is good to be loved:
It is better to love.
It is sad to be hated:
It is sadder to hate.
You are as weak as your hate is strong.
Resolve it to nothing!
Hate is a costly thing and not worth the price.
You are as strong as your love is strong.
Let it take in the whole world,
Some as your heart’s dearest,
Many as your brothers and sisters,
All as worthy a kind thought, a salute and a comradely touch of the hand.

Ethel Marjorie Knapp.