



Winter Guests

► WINTER BIRDS do not have too hard a time of it in ordinary winter weather. Chickadees and nuthatches and their cheerful little kindred are used to cold weather—even seem to like it, for they do not fly on farther south as they easily might. They make a pretty good living by prying insect pupae and egg masses out of crevices in the bark of trees, harvesting the seeds of weeds that stick up through the snow, and exploiting other sources of food that human beings would never think of.

Heavy snowfalls, especially if they are followed by light rain or partial thaw that puts a hard crust of glaze-ice on top, are apt to make life difficult on even the hardiest of "snowbirds." All but the tallest weed stalks become inaccessible, and the scattered food on the ground, which the birds can see even if we cannot, is sealed down tight.

At such times putting out food for the birds becomes a real act of mercy. Nor should you forget to put out a dish of water a couple of times a day, warming it up to the temperature of your own coffee so that it will last longer before it freezes over.

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Feeding may be as simple as you like—even table crumbs scattered on the snow will help a lot of birds. However, if the snow is loose this is rather wasteful, for much of the food will sink out of sight and be lost. It is better to rig up some kind of feeding tray, preferably with a board for windbreak on the weather side. Also, it is possible to put your tray on top of a post, or in some other position out of the reach of cats.

Whatever else you may feed your birds, don't forget to provide lumps of suet. Birds in winter need lots of calories to keep their small selves warm, and suet is one of the most concentrated sources of bodily energy that can be offered. Even with the price of meat as high as it is, you can afford a bit of suet for the

birds occasionally.

It is best not to leave the suet lumps loose on the feeding tray, lest jays or other large birds fly off with them bodily, leaving nothing for later comers. Nail your suet to a tree, or string it on a thick wire or stout cord big enough to give small birds foothold.

One ingenious woman used an old wire soap-holder to make a one-mouthful-at-a-time suet-holder. She fastened one side down loosely with staples, so that it would turn as on hinges. For the other side she arranged a rough latch of wire. This made the provisioning of suet a task she could take care of in a few seconds, and she always had birds to watch through her kitchen window.

Science News Letter, January 25, 1947

SOCIOLOGY

Marriage Rate Increases

► ABOUT a million and a half more men and women made a trip to the altar last year than in 1945.

During the first ten months of 1946 almost 50% more couples were married in the large cities of the United States than during the same months of the preceding year.

The number of marriages rose in all parts of the country. Large cities in New England showed a 53% increase from 1945 to 1946. The corresponding gain for the Middle Atlantic states was 59%. The marriage rate for large cities in the East North Central states was up 66%.

The smallest increase in marriages in 1946 as compared with the preceding year, the last war year, occurred in the Far West, where the marriage rate was maintained at a high level throughout the war period, statisticians of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company report.

Marriages in the cities of the Mountain and Pacific states last year were only 13% higher than during the preceding year. The South Atlantic states recorded next to the smallest increase, but even so they showed a 22% rise for the year.

During the first six months of 1946, a total of 1,165,175 marriage licenses was issued, as compared with 718,316 from January through June of 1945, records of the National Office of Vital Statistics, U. S. Public Health Service, show. In all of 1945 only 1,632,156 licenses were applied for.

During the first 11 months of 1946, over 716,000 couples applied for marriage licenses in cities of 100,000 or over, comprising about one-third of the total population of the United States.

The previous peak marriage year was 1942, our first year at war. The gains in the large cities in 1942, however, were concentrated in the South and the West, while the number of marriages in urban centers of the Northeast actually decreased.

Science News Letter, January 25, 1947

VETERINARY SCIENCE

Birds Can Be Infested With Barnyard Disease

► LARYNGOTRACHEITIS, a disease which wreaks havoc in American barnyards, is easily transmitted to birds, Dr. K. B. DeOme, University of California veterinary scientist, reported at the meeting of the Pasteur Society of Central California.

Three minutes' exposure to air containing droplets of the virus of this disease consistently produced clinical cases in birds, he found.

Fifteen minutes' exposure to virus-bearing dust on chick down caused infection, with no help in preventing it from glycol vapors or ultraviolet radiation. Air-borne cross-infection of birds was produced in three hours' exposure in spite of glycols and ultraviolet.

Science News Letter, January 25, 1947

Ether has been used as an anesthetic for a century.