



## THE BEST OF GOLFDOM

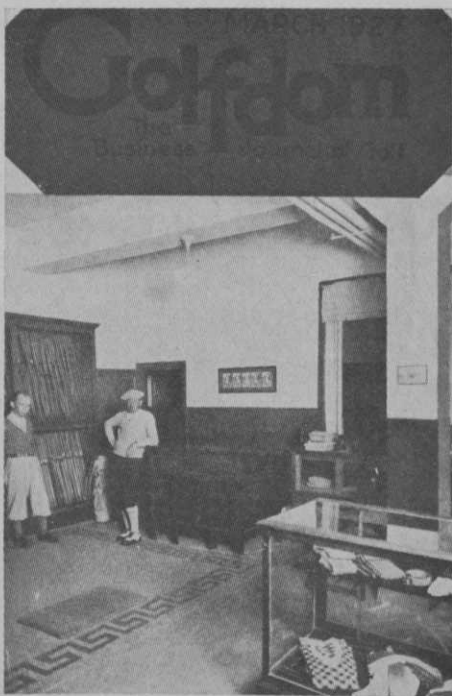
# Birds can be costcutters

*Encouraging our native  
songsters to nest in the golf  
club grounds can decimate  
insects and weeds.*

Ask the average golfers to name the largest single item of expense about his golf club and his answer probably will be "maintaining the grounds." This answer is the correct one at most clubs, but not one golfer in a thousand realizes how much of this expense could be eliminated were it not for the damage done to our courses by insects and weeds. It is safe to say that the annual budget of the greens committee could be reduced at least 33-1/3 per cent were it not for the expense of repairing constantly the damage done to our courses by these two ever present pests.

On the other hand, this damage is not as great as it might be, thanks to a number of natural controlling factors, pre-eminent among which are our native songbirds who wage a ceaseless warfare on insects and weeds.

If insects were allowed to breed and multiply unchecked, they would soon cover the ground and consume every blade of grass, every leaf on the trees. And such insects as mosquitoes, gnats and flies would be present in such numbers that human existence would be intolerable.



*The emphasis today is on chemical warfare against the insects and worms that would otherwise take their toll of golf turf. Mosquitoes even have their own "electric chair." With that in mind, it's interesting to review the approach to the problem taken in this article from the May, 1927, issue of GOLF-DOM.*

We should be very thankful, then, for this ceaseless warfare of our birds. They overlook no nook or canny. Our trees are vigilantly cleaned each day by warblers, woodpeckers, and other birds of the woodlands; the underbrush is taken care of by thrushes, wrens, and sparrows; our open fields are policed by meadowlarks, robins, sparrows and blackbirds; and the air is cleaned of flying insects by swallows, nighthawks, and flycatchers.

The voracious appetites of birds is amazing. The flicker, or yellow-hammer, for example, subsists mainly on ants, each bird consuming between three and five thousand of these little pests a day! The flicker's favorite hunting grounds are the close mowed fairways and greens; and

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during the four months of summer, every flicker we can attract to our grounds will destroy in the neighborhood of half a million ants. It is a most valuable bird to the greenkeeper.

The robin is no less valuable. Mainly insectivorous, it relishes such grass devourers as the army-worm and other caterpillars, grasshoppers, leaf-beetles, and clover-leaf weevils such grass-suckers as plant-lice, leaf-hoppers, and plant-bugs; and such sappers of the turf as clover-root borers, white grubs, wireworms and cut-worms. The small dung-beetles that mine in putting greens and throw up those little hillocks of dirt that constantly prevent good greens are relished. And last, but most important from the greenkeeper's viewpoint, the robin is the deadly enemy of the angleworm. An observer reports that in three hours a mother robin brought 61 angleworms, 16 white grubs, 38 other insects, four grasshoppers, and six dragonflies to her young ones!

It is not difficult for a golf club to attract fifty to one hundred robins to its grounds. Mr. Greens Chairman, is it not worth the bother?

**Martin is mosquito foe**—Without doubt the most annoying insect to the members of the club is the mosquito. During the rainy season and particularly on windless, humid days, this pest makes play almost impossible, and on the hot summer evenings, when the members seek the porches in search of a breeze and relief from the heat, the mosquito gets in its best work.

Luckily there is a simple means of controlling the mosquito—in addition to the usual protective practice of destroying its breeding places—for the purple martin, a friendly, graceful bird that will nest in large colonies if we but provide proper nesting houses, lives almost entirely on mosquitoes and other flying insects. It is conservatively estimated that each purple martin consumes not less than 2,000 mosquitoes a day!

By erecting four or five martin houses immediately about the clubhouse—for

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the martin likes to be near humans—it is not unusual to persuade 250 or more of these birds to stay and nest.

Let us do a little arithmetic: 250 birds consuming 2,000 mosquitoes a day equals half a million of these pests destroyed daily! Should this help to reduce the mosquito pest, Mr. Greens Chairman? If you are undecided, take our word that clubs that have erected martin houses and have attracted colonies of these birds report a noticeable diminution of mosquitoes.

The warfare on weeds is carried on in an equally thorough manner by the meadowlark and by the many species of sparrows—always excepting the English sparrow which is not beneficial and drives away from our grounds many very valuable native birds. This warfare, of course, consists in consuming great quantities of seeds of such detrimental plants as chickweed, pigweed, thistle, dandelion, ragweed, beggars-tick, crab-grass, fox-tail grass, and knotgrass—all of which are

great annoyances and difficult to eradicate from the golf course.

Our native sparrows are by far the most important of our weed-seed eaters. While they are retiring, dull-colored little birds not liable to be noticed by the average golfer, they are present by the hundreds, nesting about the course and in adjoining fields. They have ravenous appetites, and it is probably no exaggeration to say that the sparrows about a single golf club consume not less than a ton of noxious weed-seeds a year. Remove the sparrows, and in one short season this ton of weed-seeds will spread and overgrow all the fairways and greens despite the most strenuous efforts of the greensman, rendering the course totally unfit for play.

**Welcome aids all year**—Do not make the mistake of assuming our native songbirds are of value to us only during the summer months. Such is not the case, for during the spring and fall thousands of birds pass over a golf course on their way north or south, and these birds

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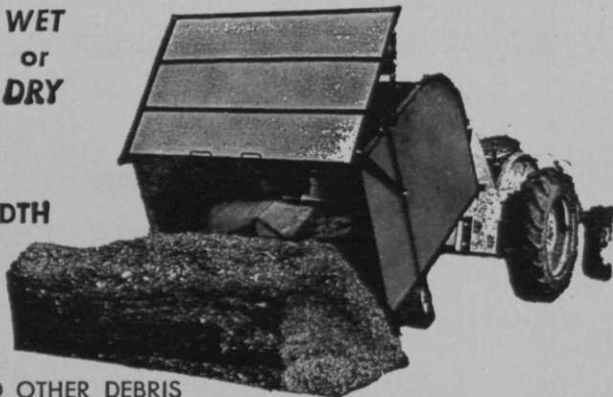
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must and do eat as they pass through. In the spring, from March until June, the transient birds destroy tens of thousands of newly emerged insects which if allowed to live would breed millions of progeny. During the fall migration, August to November, the recently matured weed-seeds and the insects about to hibernate through the winter are destroyed in large numbers. And all through the winter our hardy birds that are with us at that time do further estimable work in gleaning the seeds overlooked by the earlier feeders, and in searching out very thoroughly from the bark of trees and bushes both insects and insect-eggs.

From the viewpoint of the golfer, and particularly the Greens Chairman and greenkeeper, there is not a native bird that is not of value in making our golf courses more beautiful, more livable, and more playable.

A bird program—It behooves every golf club, then, to do all in its power to attract to its grounds just as many

songbirds as possible and to protect them once they are obtained. To do this, in a thorough and intelligent manner, a complete program of bird attraction and bird protection must be carried out. In brief outline, this consists in:

1. Making the club grounds a bird sanctuary, prohibiting hunting, and eliminating as completely as possible the English sparrow, the house cat, and in some localities the squirrel.

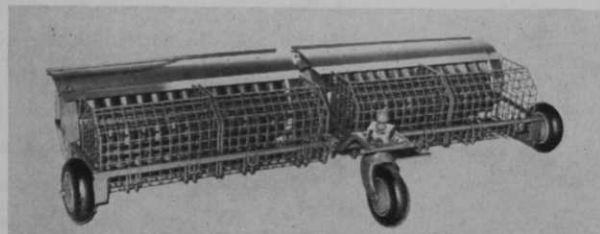
2. Investing an adequate sum in bird houses, bird baths, feeding stations, and the like. (The bird houses may be erected at any time, but it is best to put them up in the fall or winter so they may be well "seasoned" by the time the birds return in the spring. Birds are wary of new houses, disliking particularly the smell of fresh paint.)

3. Distributing about the grounds during the spring and early summer months nesting materials such as string, strips of cloth, horsehair, and cotton batting. This material will cause many a bird to remain and nest that otherwise would have migrated farther north.

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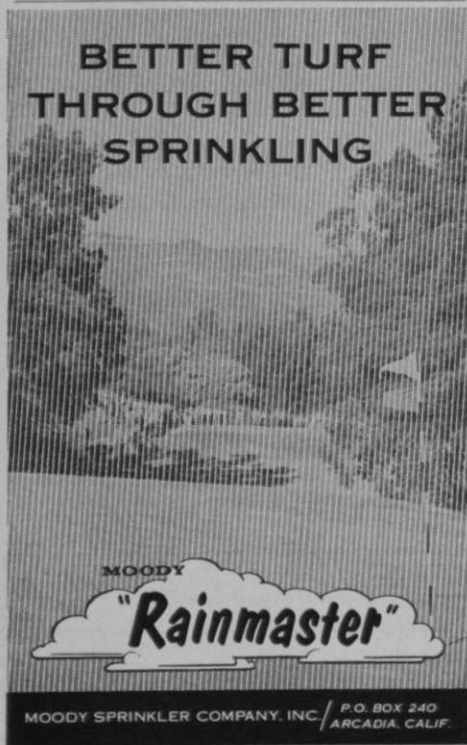


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4. Erecting one or two bird baths in front of the clubhouse. They will be in constant use by the birds and afford endless entertainment to the members.

5. Planting heavy thickets of shrubbery about the grounds (if they are not already present). They offer nesting sites, protection against enemies in summer and storms in winter.

6. Planting berry-bearing bushes and trees, particularly those types that hold their fruit through the winter. Fruit-bearing plants attract many birds to the grounds in summer and are the means of keeping the winter birds alive when other food is buried beneath a heavy blanket of snow.

GOLFDOM suggests that a Bird Committee be appointed immediately at your club if such a body does not already exist, with some sympathetic member as chairman. This chairman should be a bird lover with energy and patience enough to see the program of bird protection carried to a successful attainment. •

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The Allis-Chalmers Electric Golf Car price was listed incorrectly in the 1966 Golf Car Specification chart in the February issue of GOLFDOM, having been listed at \$1,295 instead of \$995, the correct figure.

The golf car is offered with tiller or steering wheel and has contoured seats and heavy duty pneumatic tires.