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THE ROADRUNNER

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AUDUBON SCREEN TOURS

The regular November meeting consisted of the first number of the Audubon Screen Tours, presented at the Austin Junior High School, November 13. Some 500 enthusiastic El Pasoans attended this initial number, "Bird Magic in Mexico", applauding as Dr. Olin Sewall Pettingill threw on the screen pictures of the Tamaulipas jungle. Bamboo trees, brilliant flowers and butterflies, a rough-coated burro, green iguanos and tropical birds came to life as he recounted the adventures of the Cornell University-Carleton College expedition on the Rio Sabinas, fifty miles south of Victoria, Mexico. The Bird Club and the Public Schools of El Paso, co-sponsors of these Tours, bespeak for the subsequent four numbers a continuance of the spirited support accorded the first number.

THE DECEMBER MEETING

A meeting for members only will be held at 7:30 P.M., Tuesday, December 10, at the College of Mines Museum. Officers will be elected and dues received for the coming year. Plans for the Christmas Bird Count will be discussed.

THE JANUARY MEETING

The second number of the Audubon Screen Tours will be given at the Austin High School Auditorium, Friday, January 10: "The Music of the Out-of-Doors". Bert Harwell, California naturalist, will present the film. Wild geese will fly over and water ouzels will sing, all because he whistles their notes to his own piano accompaniment. This is an illustrated wild-life lecture that has the hearty tang of western out-of-doors.

NEW MEMBERS

Mrs. Stella McClure is a new member of the club.

THE SUMMER'S BEST RECORDS (By the Editor)

The summer in El Paso and its environs was not without notable avian events. At Ascarate Park, July 23, the nest of a California cuckoo was found (McBee), containing two quaint, black, blind birds and two eggs. Nearby was an Arizona least vireo's nest that, on July 28, held one egg and one newly-hatched bird, destined to be the only occupant. This is possibly the latest nesting record established for this vireo, which is not known to raise a second brood, so far as I have read, in the same season. A western mourning dove, not far distant, was found (Allen) sitting on a nest, June 24, that had two young birds about five days old and an unhatched egg. When George McClelland Bradt photographed this nest three days later, the contents were unchanged in number.

Ascarate Lake had some interesting visitors, which included a least bittern, June 24 (probably resident), two western grebes, October 20 and 27, and three double-crested cormorants, October 13. As in previous summers, the blue grosbeak nested in the park, along with mockingbird, mourning dove, and black-chinned hummingbird; and outside the park in the river bank, Say's phoebe and a pair of rough-winged swallows.

On the Country Club golf course, Mrs. Wilmarth found western robins feeding grown young, about June 1. This constitutes our first certain breeding record for

the robin here. Phainopepla and inca dove were more in evidence in that area than in previous years. On the bird refuge near the Country Club bridge, a colony of bank swallows nested as usual; so did the green and the black-crowned night herons and the snowy egrets, the long-tailed chat, Traill's flycatcher, verdin, roadrunner and mockingbird.

Scott's sparrow was heard and seen in McKelligon's Canyon in late July (Durkee and McBee), where it is infrequently observed through the year; and canyon wrens were feeding young in the red cliffs. A family of canyon towhees were in evidence, the immature joining brokenly in a towhee chorus.

At Radium Springs, New Mexico, seventy miles north of El Paso, club members identified Lucy's warbler, two pairs, April 28 (Keefer, Wilmarth, Harper, Durkee, McBee). These little grey Arizona nesters appeared to be contesting ^{nesting} territory with the aggressive yellow warblers. At least one pair of Lucy's remained all summer; they were seen as late as August 5, with immature birds, near the spot where we had observed them at intervals through the summer months. Late in June, a female phainopepla was seen feeding young in a lofty nest in a cottonwood nearby (Keefer and Wilmarth).

On the Jornada Wild Life Refuge above Las Cruces, Cassin's sparrows were vaulting into the air to sing their little flight songs, July 7 (Bradts and McBee). At Ash Springs, higher in the San Andres Mountains, a pair of gray vireos sang and added finishing touches to their nest in a shrub of mesquite, May 12.

Memorial Park received a small flock of early fall migrants, August 16. Among them were wood pewee, pileolated and MacGillivray's warblers, rufous and broad-tailed hummingbirds, western tanager, and Cassin's purple finch.

DR. PETTINGILL'S BIRDS

Of the three dozen or more birds that appear in Dr. Olin S. Pettingill's "Bird Magic in Mexico", several are to be seen in El Paso. Immature members of the little blue heron family, photographed craftily devouring a hellgramite, sometimes straggle northward in spring and fall to El Paso, where they may be seen in flocks of two to twenty. Snowy egrets, of course, are common here, and two heronries have been discovered. Turkey vultures appear wherever food is available, and they find a dead goat as palatable as the dead dog shown in the film. Black vultures are seen only casually in El Paso County. Spotted sandpipers, which nest along streams in higher altitudes, occur here in migration. Our nesting inca dove is seen less frequently than the mourning dove. Belted kingfishers are common permanent residents along streams. A sub-species of the downy woodpecker (Batchelder's) nests in the Sacramento Mountains and is an infrequent visitor here in winter. Great-tailed grackles nest commonly in the cattails along the Rio Grande. Cowbirds have been known to deposit their eggs in nests of our long-tailed chat and Traill's flycatcher. Barn swallows use saliva to attach their nests to barn rafters and bridges. Bullock's oriole is the more common of our two nesting orioles.

Among the essentially Mexican birds shown in Dr. Pettingill's film are the Muscovy duck, which we saw displaying and courting; Audubon's caracara, waiting to feast on a dog's carcass when the vultures were sated; a white-fronted dove, pumping food simultaneously into two nestlings' mouths; a red-crowned parrot and green parakeets, feeding in the bamboo; squirrel cuckoo, seeking the sunshine; and groove-billed ani, skulking behind saw-edged huipilla; a parauque or nighthawk; buff-bellied and broad-billed hummingbirds, sitting serenely on the nest; coppery-tailed trogon in convincing hues; derby flycatcher and Giraud flycatcher nesting in one shrub—a list to delight the bird-lover. Then there was a masked tityra, looking somewhat like the shrike and fighting with a golden-fronted woodpecker for the nesting hole that both desired. The curassow spread his lofty crown; the chachalaca, subject of the lecturer's wit, failed to appear on the screen. A hooded ~~oriole~~ oriole built in the photographer's blind, incredibly; and an Alta mira oriole, after weeks of deliberation, constructed a two-foot-long stocking of a nest. The rose-throated becard, not too much larger than a sparrow, built a nest a foot and a half in diameter, which was chopped down from a lofty bough by a youthful member of the expedition, Bob Lea. The ubiquitous brown jay acted as alarmist. Thus was captured for us the bird magic of Mexico.

—Emily Barlow

NEW SPECIMEN RECEIVED

The Museum at the College of Mines has recently received a valued addition to its ornithological collection, a whistling swan; which, together with a golden eagle, was the gift of Mr. and Mrs. J. D. McGregor, Jr. The swan was taken near Ascension, Mexico.

This beautiful bird, mounted as if in the act of taking to the water, is pure white with feet and bill black and a yellow spot on the bill near the eye. One of the largest of our wild birds, about two and one-half feet long, with a wing-spread of seven feet, the whistling swan breeds mainly north of the Arctic Circle. It

winters on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts of the United States; and formerly, at least, it wintered on the Gulf Coast of Louisiana and Texas. It is mentioned as casual in New Mexico. Mrs. Bailey reports it as a rare migrant in New Mexico; but a friend who formerly hunted all over this region says that twenty-five years ago he used to see these birds in the Mesilla Valley, particularly in the vicinity of San Tomas. Of late years, with the draining of the Valley and the clearing of the land for farming, I know of no record; and certainly no member of the Bird Club has had the good fortune to see one of these noble birds near El Paso.

—Mary Belle Keefer

A COUPLE OF MALLARDS

Our next-door neighbors were visiting in their home state, Oklahoma, last summer. When they were ready to come back, a friend gave their boys two wild ducks. Those mallards had been hatched from eggs which had been set under a hen. The ducks were full-grown, but still quite wild.

Our friends brought them home and kept them in a chicken pen that was covered with poultry wire. The ducks seemed happy, but they would not eat in the presence of man. They came out of their hiding place at night and ate chicken mash, and drank, and tried to swim in the bucket of water kept for the chickens.

Then our friends had to move to another city. They could not take the mallards with them, nor did they have time to plan for them at all. So they told me to do with them whatever seemed best.

I wanted to have someone take the poor creatures down to the river and set them free, but I could not find anyone with a minute's time to do it. Everyone promised to do it later. So I had the ducks put in our own back yard till something better could be done for them.

We have a small pool for the birds, and the two mallards took to it in a big way. The first night they were in the pool all night long. It was the same the second night, but very early in the morning of the third night, they decided to try their wings. They rose and flew away. Where they went, no one knows.

They were gone all day, but just as the sun sank behind Mount Franklin, and the sky turned blood red, my ducks flew in. They came from toward the mountains, and they were quacking as though they were terribly excited.

They over-shot the yard and would not come back till after dark. In fact, they did not get in till the next morning. When they did get in, they rushed to the pool and drank as though they were really thirsty. For a full ten minutes, they drank without stopping.

All day they sat around and acted very tired. Several times they went back to the pool and drank and swam a little.

Some time during the night, they rose and flew away again. They circled the house twice and quacked as though they were telling me good-by.

Their quacks became fainter and fainter. They were gone! I felt that this time they were gone for good. I was right. They never came back.

But who knows? Next spring, if they do not get killed by a hunter, my ducks may stop off on their way to the north to get themselves a drink in our pool. I hope they do.

—Fred Cornelius

PANCHO VILLA

Uncle Tom found the baby owl under a tree down on the ranch. The tiny bird had such a decided personality that he thought it was worth trying to raise. Evidently the little owl agreed with him because it accepted a freshly killed mouse in the spirit in which it was offered and became a member of the family from the first bite.

When the baby owl came to live with us General Pershing was in Mexico hunting for General Pancho Villa, and we named the owl Pancho Villa because he would hide, just like the general, and watch us search the house before he flew out to join us.

Pancho had the run of the house. He lived on watchfully friendly terms with our two cats. He would sit on a bookcase or the back of a chair and watch them but if either made a move in his direction he was off.

He had several different tones of voice. Once in a while he would screech at night and he would sit on my finger and croon contentedly while I scratched his head, raising and lowering his ear-like feathers, and when things went wrong he would scold violently. The worst language he ever used was the time the cats cornered him under the bookcase. They could not reach him but he could not get out and the things he said turned the air blue.

Pancho was so friendly he was rather a nuisance. He did not seem to mind being out in the daylight and would fly, silently, out of nowhere and land on the nearest shoulder or on the arm of a chair. It was startling. When he was displeased, he would take small bites out of the nearest hand. He could not understand why humans did not always do exactly what he wanted them to or why they were sometimes so slow

in taking the chill off his meat for him.

When he was too much of a nuisance, Pancho was shut up in the conservatory. He liked the plants and the quiet. We had to stop keeping him there after he ate the edge off every leaf on my mother's prize Christmas cactus.

Probably wild owls do not eat vegetables but Pancho did. He preferred red ones, such as beets and watermelon; but he would eat lettuce, carrots and raw peas. Meat was much more to his taste. At first he refused anything but freshly killed mice. Did you ever try to catch enough mice to feed a growing owl? Don't, it is much easier to train him to eat small chunks of beef, with the icebox chill warmed off.

Pancho's voracious appetite was the cause of his death. He was in the kitchen (the one room he was not allowed in) and saw the cook put a piece of raw meat on to boil for soup. He tried to take it out of the pot and fell in and was drowned.

It has been more than twenty years since Pancho Villa lived with us and we have had other pets—Robert Tailer, the bobcat, Concha, the parrot, well loved cats and dogs—but none have left a more vivid memory than Pancho Villa, the little owl.

—Elizabeth Kelly

A MISSOURIAN GOES WEST

To an amateur bird student, accustomed to the cool, green oaks and walnuts of the Ozarks, the "wide open spaces" of the Texas desert, the tangled thickets of the bosque along the Rio Grande, and the straight-backed pines of Cloudcroft create quite unfamiliar and fascinating impressions of a strange, new land. For years, my Nature World had been comprised of the valleys of the Mississippi and Missouri—hilly, heavily-forested country, dotted with rich and productive farms, and shallow, marshy lakes and ponds. Birding consisted of peering thru the dense foliage of a great oak, with the hope of finding the well-hidden warbler, or tramping around a lake to gain a better vantage point, from which waterfowl, hundreds of yards from shore, may more easily be seen. Standing kneedeep in mud, pussyfooting thru poison ivy, slapping constantly at mosquitoes—and missing many that didn't miss me—became commonplace, and were taken in their stride. It was difficult and tiring, especially when afoot, but great satisfaction was felt after each new discovery, and gradually these new finds became more numerous as each difficulty was met and conquered. In time, mastery of the "eastern" style of birding resulted.

And then came the Army, and the fulfillment of a dream, my first trip West. How utterly different this land of the mesas seemed at first! Old birding habits and methods had to be forgotten and new ones acquired. A birder actually must be a "big game hunter" when in the field, and must not flush his feathered prey without getting a "shot" at it with his binoculars. In Missouri the woodland thickets or tall weeds form natural blinds which allow the closest approach to the birds without detection. In the Southwest, however, the barren desert and the sparsity of trees provide little cover. It therefore became necessary to adapt the fine points of stalking to meet this new problem. Patience and cautious movement were the watchword.

Oddly enough, though, the most difficult field trip I have ever experienced was the result of an expedition into the pines and spruce of Ruidoso, New Mexico. There, I found to my dismay nothing short of an X-ray machine could penetrate the shielding boughs of the evergreens. Scores of birds could be heard, but few would "go out on a limb", preferring instead to camouflage themselves with needles and cones. To be defeated by a tiny bird only yards away was irritating indeed, but each victorious discovery was that much sweeter.

Yet, despite these marked contrasts between the humid, woody hills of Missouri and the arid or mountainous regions of the Southwest, certain definite characteristics are common to both. The birds themselves are still closely related. The hawks and sparrows and shorebirds of the East have similar representatives in the West, varying mainly in dress and song. The West, it's true, claims more unusual and exotic species, such as the roadrunner, the quail, and the hummingbirds, than does the East, but that seems only natural when the wild and rugged constitution of the land is considered.

But, whether El Paso or St. Louis, whether on the desert, by the sea, or in the forests, the satisfying warmth of an early morning sun, the cool, clear air, the faint fragrance of a native flower—the very freedom of all Nature, alive and unspoiled by man's ax and gun, is there to enjoy, and one soon surrenders to its spell. That is what makes birding anywhere so grand!

—Pfc. Nicholas M. Short
Fort Bliss, Texas

THE RING-NECKED PHEASANT

"Oh, Auntie Marie, isn't the Valley beautiful in the fall?" asked a little girl to the lady driving the old black car. "I love the green and brown and gold of the leaves. I love the purple mountains and the blue sky, and the river and the golden cottonwoods."

"I love the autumn, too, Anita," answered Mrs. Lamar.

"How brown the cotton fields are since the frosts came! It has not all been picked, has it?" Anita continued. "It was very nice of you to ask me to go with you to get the boys."

"I like to have you along to talk to me. Do you suppose the boys have had a pleasant week-end?"

"Oh, I am sure they have had a lovely time. I hope they will see something new to tell the Bird Club. Oh look, Auntie Marie! The juncos are back for the winter. Do you think the robins and bluebirds will be here soon?"

Mrs. Lamar stopped the car beside the road, and they watched the little gray birds hop about in the bushes or scratch in the grass and leaves. All the time they kept talking softly to each other, with a little clicking sound.

"Anita," whispered Mrs. Lamar, "look to the left, coming down the ditch bank."

A large bird with bright feathers was walking slowly, picking up first one foot and then another, and turning his head this way and that. On each cheek was a bright red patch. His dark head looked green in the sun.

Neither person in the car made a sound. They looked at the long pointed tail. They admired the beautiful colors of his feathers.

As he reached the bushes at the right of the road he stopped and looked at the car for a long moment, then disappeared in the long grass.

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Lamar, "I wonder if the boys have seen anything as beautiful as that bird! Do you know what it was?"

"I can guess," answered Anita. "His tail feathers looked just like the feather in your new green hat."

"So they did. My hat is trimmed with a pheasant feather. Perhaps Mr. Hill can tell us about this bird." Mrs. Lamar started the car.

"Oh, Mr. Hill," called Anita as she jumped from the car. "We saw a beautiful big bird about so long." Anita spread her hands almost as far apart as a yardstick is long. "It was black and red and brown and yellow. Its breast was colored like a turkey, and below that it was blue. It had a long, pointed tail. It wore a white collar, too."

Mr. Hill laughed. "You did use your eyes, didn't you?" he said. "What you saw was a ring-necked pheasant. He is not a native of our country, like our wild turkey. He was brought into this country from China. Many people call him the Chinese pheasant. He is protected, like the quail, all except a few days of the year. During the pheasant season many will be killed. Some people think they are very good to eat."

"But won't the hunters kill them all?" Anita wanted to know.

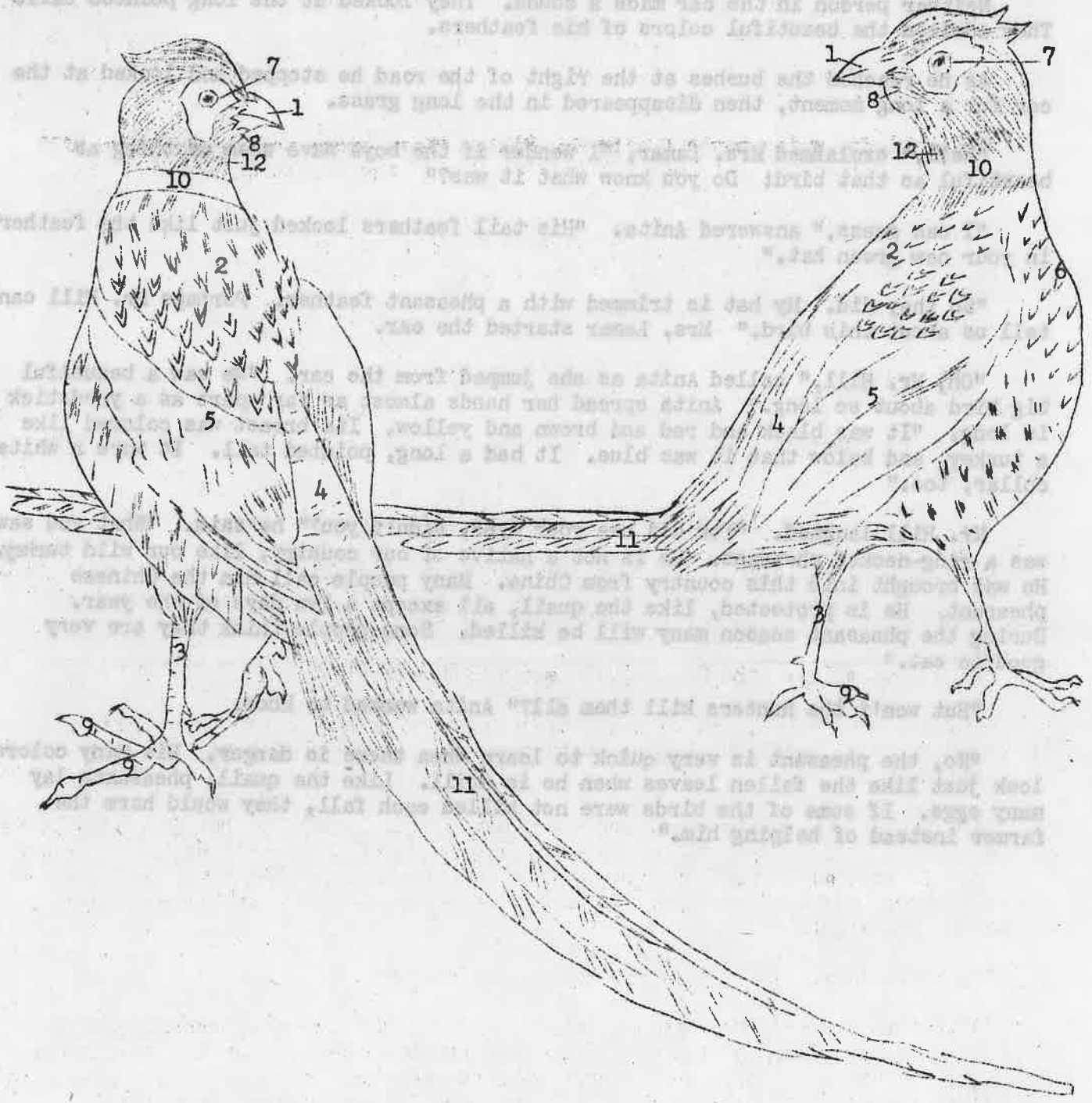
"No, the pheasant is very quick to learn when there is danger. His many colors look just like the fallen leaves when he is still. Like the quail, pheasants lay many eggs. If some of the birds were not killed each fall, they would harm the farmer instead of helping him."

THE HING-WINGED PHOENIX

Do you know the parts of a bird? Try to fill in the squares below. The first and last letters are given. You will find the numbers on the birds.

1.	B			L	7.	E			S
2.	B			K	8.	C			N
3.	L			S	9.	F			T
4.	R			P	10.	N			K
5.	W			G	11.	T			L
6.	B								
				T	12.	T			T

- 1. What he eats with
- 2. Between the wings
- 3. What he runs with
- 4. Below the back
- 5. What he flies with
- 6. Below the throat
- 7. What he sees with
- 8. Under his bill
- 9. What he scratches with
- 10. Between head and body
- 11. At the end of his body
- 12. Between chin and breast



THE QUAIL

Two men in hunting clothes drove up to the Lamar home. Before there was time to honk the horn, four joyful boys were at the curb.

"We're all ready, Dad," called Carlos.

"Then fall in," answered Mr. Lamar. "Uncle John wants to drop you boys at the Hill Farm and then drive on to Silver City before bedtime. Deer season opens in the morning, you know."

"Uncle John, do you know my friends?" asked Tommy. "This is Jay Owen and Jimmy Day. Boys, this is my uncle, Mr. Martin."

"How do you do, Mr. Martin," said both boys. Jimmy continued, "It was very nice of Mr. and Mrs. Hill to tell Carlos and Tommy to bring two friends. Mother says Mrs. Hill must not remember how much boys eat!"

The boys talked happily as the car rolled up the valley highway. Before sundown they stopped at the old adobe farmhouse. Everyone called greetings and good-byes, and the hunters were off again.

"How nice to have a house full of boys again," smiled the little old lady when everyone was inside. "Supper will be ready as soon as you have washed."

Early the next morning the boys were up. They helped Mr. Hill do the chores, and watched him milk the cow. Then what a breakfast they ate!

"Would you like to walk over the farm this morning?" asked Mr. Hill.

"Just as soon as we dry the dishes for Mrs. Hill," answered Carlos.

Soon the four boys were ready. How beautiful the golden trees looked in the morning sun! A meadowlark whistled from a fencepost. Several Negro cotton pickers called back and forth as they picked the big, fluffy white cotton from the open bolls.

"Look at the birds flying overhead," said Jimmy. "There must be millions of them." One flock flew nearer and, like a curling wave, dropped out of sight in the tall grass of the drainage ditch.

"Blackbirds, going south," said Mr. Hill. "Now, cross the canal and we will sit and pretend that we are weeds. I think you will see something you will like."

Soon many large fat birds walked across the dry grass. They scratched like chickens in the fallen leaves. They talked to each other in soft bird language. Each bird had a black plume curving over his black face.

Jay forgot to be quiet. "Oh, Mr. Hill, what are they?" he asked.

In an instant every bird, with neck stretched before him, had vanished in the brush. "Where did they go?" asked Jay.

"Those were Gambel's quail," answered Mr. Hill. "That covey hatched right over there under that first bush."

"Oh, Mr. Hill, please tell us all about them," begged the boys.

"Last spring one pair of quail decided to nest near this canal bank. They chose a heavy bush to shelter the nest. This nest was a cup in the ground and lined with bits of dry grass. The mother laid fifteen eggs in it."

"Were they white, like Bob White's eggs?" asked Carlos.

"No, not pure white, and they had brown marks on them. I have not found a Bob White's nest on my land; but I have heard them whistle their 'Bob White? Bob White?' every spring."

"The mother sat on the eggs, and every day I came to talk to her and bring her a little chicken feed. When the babies came from the shell, they all seemed to hatch at once. As soon as their down was dry they left the nest. They sleep in a different place every night, I am sure. Those little balls of fluff are the prettiest babies in the world!"

"You like quail, don't you, Mr. Hill?" asked Jimmy.

"Oh, yes. Every farmer likes quail. They are friendly and cheerful, and a great help to us. They eat weed seeds and harmful insects. Out on the desert you will find the scaled quail. Some people call him the blue quail or cotton top. And New Mexico also has the Mearns' quail, which looks like a little guinea hen."

"I never saw any before except the Bob White," said Carlos. "Do you know why?"

"The Bob White is the only kind found in the East," Mr. Hill went on. "The Bob White you find near El Paso is called the Texas Bob White. While he often flies away from danger, he also has a way of 'freezing' so he cannot be seen."

"What will happen to your quail when the quail season opens?" asked Jay. "Won't the hunters shoot them? Why would anyone want to shoot a quail, anyway?"

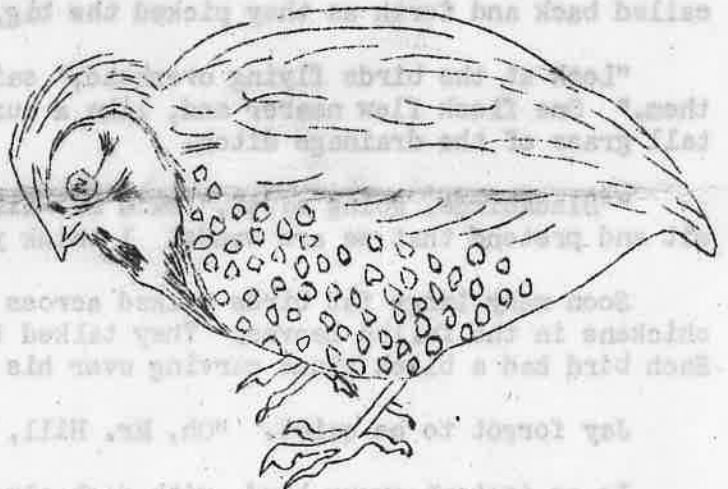
"Because they are game birds, and they are very good to eat. If many were not killed every fall, the quail would soon be a harm to the farmer instead of a help."

"Now, I must go back and weigh the cotton for the pickers. If you boys wish to walk through the trees to the river, I am sure you will see many things. But when the sun is high overhead, start back to the house. Mrs. Hill always has dinner at twelve o'clock."

CAN YOU NAME THESE GAME BIRDS? PUT THE LETTERS IN THEIR PROPER ORDER.



xeTsa obB eWiht



earnsM' Qilau



dealcS ualiQ



beGalms' aiQul