

BIRDS IN THE PHILIPPINES

THE KINDS OF BIRDS

THE Philippines is rich in birds. Being a tropical country, it has many forests and woods where birds can build their homes and live. In this country, there are no winters, no long cold season which kill the birds. Every day is a spring day. Even during the rainy season, the birds do not have to fly away to some other country, because the forests offer them protection from the heavy rains and the strong winds.

Do you know that there are about nine hundred kinds of birds in the Philippines? Some of these are land birds; others are water birds, while still others are shore birds. Water birds are those who live in the water. They build their homes there and their food consist of things that they can find in the water. The land birds are those who live away from the water. They fly from tree to tree, eating fruits and insects or animals. Shore birds can live on both land and water.

Among these nine hundred kinds of birds, there are those which are known as birds of prey. These birds hunt animals and birds which are weaker than they are. They are the terror of the woods. Eagles and hawks are well known examples of birds of prey.

The song birds, on the other hand, are best loved among the birds. Their melodious singing makes the forest ring joyously. When they are caught, their music delight little children. They are also among our best friends, for they eat insects that harm our plants and flowers.

The fruit-eating birds form another group. They may be beneficial or harmful. They eat fruits from the trees. They also make good pets, for most of them are nice to look at.

We also speak of birds as beneficial, harmful, or neutral. The beneficial birds are those who help farmers, gardeners and others. They eat up insects or other harm-



ful animals like rats and snakes. They produce fertilizers which enrich the ground for planting. Their feathers and meat and even their nests are of great value to those who take the trouble to get them. Have you ever heard of edible birds' nests? These are made into soup and sold for good prices afterwards.

The harmful birds are those who destroy our plants and kill our chickens. The mayas or weaver birds, the crows, hawks and eagles are examples of this group. The mayas and the crows are enemies of farmers. They feed on the grains and the fruit that are grown in the fields. The hawks and the eagles carry away chickens and use them for food.

The neutral birds are those who neither do harm nor do good. They just exist without distinct characteristics which make them the friends or the enemies of man. A well-known example are the game birds, or the birds which are hunted for their food value.

Around you, birds live and die. Some of them are your friends. Others are your enemies. A great number are helpers whom you do not recognize. When you see a bird sailing against the sky or resting on a bough, think of this great feathered brotherhood which inhabit your forests and woods—such a great variety of them, nine hundred strong in all, each wearing a different color and built a different size from the other.

(Next month: The biggest bird in the Philippines.)