

## More Birds for the Golf Course

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The duffer is heartened and the expert is thrilled at the presence of birds on the course. Song birds, game birds, and ornamental fowl strutting their colorful magnificence over the links serve to break the deadly, nerve-straining concentration that ruins so many strokes. Furthermore, the landscape is lonely and uninteresting when it is devoid of birds.

It is easy to attract and hold many species of wild fowl on the grounds of the country club. From the smallest humming bird to the peacock, hardy species will remain where they find feed, water, and shelter. The last item includes protection from natural enemies, as well as cover that shields the birds from the elements. These general requirements apply to all species, although in varying extent, depending upon which birds are desired.



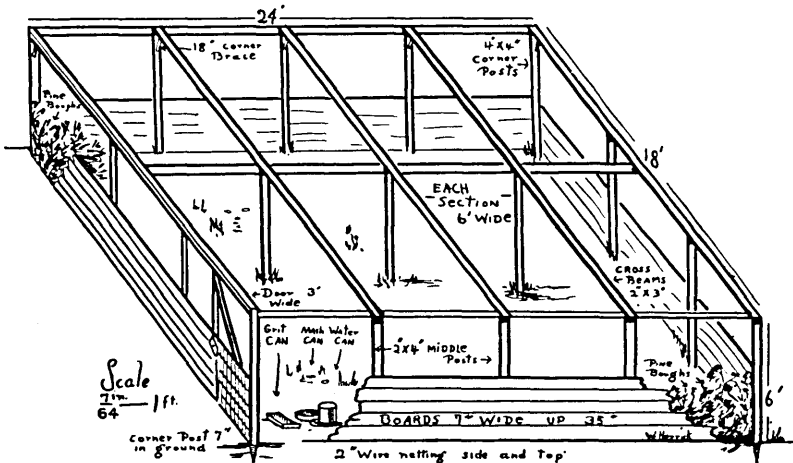
Adult breeding stock of wild turkeys in their summer pen. The wooden frames are roosting places

No great expense is necessary to transform the average course into a paradise for the birds. Merely leaving a good portion of the rough to attend to itself will ordinarily produce a good bit of both feed and cover. With the usual workmen delegated at times to set traps for house cats, and to catch the mink in any brook that may be on the place, or attend to the elimination of special enemies when needed, the protection end can be cared for.

Should the club wish to do so, there is almost no limit to what may be done toward increasing the wild birds. Game breeding may be carried on; ornamental birds may be reared and released on the grounds to care for themselves, furnish good shooting for members, and wander into the adjoining country for the benefit of the State at large.

The matter of feed is very important. No wild birds will linger where there is nothing to eat. Planting grasses, grains, shrubs, and

trees with edible seeds assists the natural increase on land left to itself. Practically all species of the plant life that thrives in the climate where the club is located will produce some sort of seed that is eaten by birds. The tone of the grounds may be natural and only native plants set out, or artificial and landscape gardening and foreign specimens used. Available open fields outside the fairways may be left uncut. They will thus afford nesting places for all birds which conduct their housekeeping at the ground level. It would be well to discourage members from tramping through this grass until after the young birds are able to fly. Some may say that this makes the fields unsightly; but these same people will be immensely pleased at walking through that same uncut field during August and seeing coveys of quail burst into the air before them, or, as they wander past the tangle of grass, along paths kept clipped, to hear the songs of the sparrows and the melodious whistling of quail. A further objection to leaving large areas of grass unmowed is that it constitutes a fire menace. This is true, especially during dry seasons. Yet it may be overcome by mowing wide paths through the field or by cutting the grass in a wide swath around the entire area.



Plan for ring-necked pheasants' pen

By allowing the grass to grow, the seeds mature on the stalks and provide feed abundantly. For this same reason, and also for the reason that too formal a landscape offers little shelter, it is not advisable to indulge in wholesale trimming and pruning or excessive clearing of brush. Many country estates have been made completely pleasing to aesthetic tastes but have thereby been ruined for the birds. If some degree of formality is wanted, let it be balanced against some natural growth that will bring the beauty and cheeriness of birds. Instead of a bare expanse of green fields, let there be groves of trees and clumps of shrubbery, perhaps augmented by rustic seats in the shade for the comfort of the players. A moment's relaxation during a game is often worth strokes.

Golf courses throughout the country present wonderful opportunities for really worth-while work in conservation. Their land is patrolled by workmen constantly, natural enemies and poaching may be controlled, and the effects of carelessness by single property

owners with no time for such matters will be partially offset. Though feed and cover be perfect, no birds will linger where they find vermin numerous or where they are attacked by gunning in the breeding season. In this sense vermin includes all species of birds, animals, and reptiles that prey upon the more desirable species. Certain hawks and owls, crows, red squirrels, foxes, rats, weasels, skunks, mink, house cats, large frogs and snakes, and fish are among them. It is absolutely wrong to forbid all shooting and trapping on a game preserve. Without control, the vermin will flock to areas abounding in birds. Breeding stock, young, and eggs will fall into the maw of the bird destroyers, and the sanctuary will amount to nothing more than a wonderful feeding ground for these plunderers.

I do not advise extermination of all vermin throughout the country. Many of the malefactors listed possess admirable habits. Skunks live to a considerable extent on beetles, grubs and mice. Foxes give much good sport. House cats have a certain section of our approval as rodent killers and pets. Crows discourage hawks and owls from too extensive depredations, and for this reason alone are of much benefit to the bird lover. Control of vermin is the work of preventing these marauders from becoming too numerous and offensive.



One of the least suspected enemies of birds is the turtle, which destroys quantities of their eggs

Pole traps at least ten feet high will catch hawks and owls. These operate with a steel trap hooked under a nail at the top of the pole. Hawks and owls like to roost on some high vantage point to survey the surrounding ground before making a dive for their prey. The poles are bolted to posts set firmly in the ground and may be taken indoors when not in use. One or two good crow-shoots by members each year will keep the pests down to reasonable proportions. The birds decoy easily to stuffed owls, and the gunners can do immense good and have unbounded fun when the flocks gather to torment their ancient enemy.

House cats are the worst bird destroyers in the world. Contemptuous of man, through their long familiarity with him, they are able to do far more damage to the birds than is any wild animal. All over the country sportsmen wonder why game is so scarce, why it does not increase, when food and cover are plentiful. The majority of such conditions are caused by house cats, and the only cure is to eliminate the animal. This is a further argument in support of the growing sentiment toward laws requiring all house cats to be licensed, just as dogs are licensed. That would limit the number of cats in the community, and the problem would be more easily solved. However, with or without a license, a cat killing birds should be shot—exactly as if she were killing the domestic poultry belonging

to a single property owner rather than the birds owned by the people of the State. Rule that all cats entering the premises of the club do so at their own risk and use a gun on the felines that disregard the warning, and you will have an increased number of song and game birds and wild rabbits on your course. Shooting vermin may be done in the early morning before many members have reached the club. Thieving animals are especially active soon after dawn. Such early-rising members as the club possesses may be warned of the shooting.

Golf courses are of considerable benefit to the birds. The short grass of the fairways makes a safe promenade for the broods of your pheasants and quail when the taller grass is wet. Each bird is an almost insatiable consumer of obnoxious insects that live by destroying greens and grass. The more birds you have, the less money you will be compelled to spend for sprays and other means of exterminating the pests.

Water hazards may be made more attractive, and the mosquitoes that breed in them oftentimes will thus be put to practical use by waterfowl. Wood ducks and mandarin ducks, swans, mallards, a whole army of gloriously colorful specimens, may be maintained at little expense, and the sale of surplus stock can be turned to a profit. The wild water birds may be attracted to the larger ponds and lakes by judicious sowing of the foods they need—wild rice, wild celery, duck potato, and other plants.

All this is only a hint at the extensive subject, details of which differ with individual conditions. I am glad to place at the disposal of all country clubs the services of the game-breeding department of *Field and Stream* magazine. As editor of that department, I shall be delighted to answer any questions at any time. If personal inspection is desired, I shall be glad to visit clubs at no more charge than my expenses from Kittery Point, Maine, or New York City, and return. Such assistance should be arranged for somewhat in advance. Whenever I can combine several places in one trip I shall be glad to do so in order that the individual clubs may be placed at only the minimum of expense.

Much can be done for birds. They will return a thousandfold any effort made in their behalf. Without birds the country is a lonesome place.

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### Motion Pictures of Golf Course Birds

The golf club bird sanctuary committee of the National Association of Audubon Societies announces the preparation of a motion picture film on the subject of birds of golf courses, containing "beautiful golfing views and fascinating close-ups of birds at work gathering food on the green or feeding hungry youngsters." The picture is put out on 16 mm. film, which is used in the small projectors now readily available to nearly every golf club. The photographing was done by Dr. A. A. Allen, professor of ornithology at Cornell University. The picture will be loaned free to members of any golf club whose requests are endorsed by the president of their club. Requests for the use of this film should be addressed to Dr. T. Gilbert Pearson, President, National Association of Audubon Societies, 1974 Broadway, New York City.