

# "Birds"

*The Present Truth* – January 4, 1894

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"Behold the fowls of the air; . . . your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" Matt. 6:26.

In the country, in the city, on dry land, or on the ocean, wherever we go we find our feathered friends—the birds. What a quiet, lonely place earth would be without them! They fill the air with music, the trees with life and beauty, and our hearts with joy and gladness.

There are two kinds of birds, flying birds, and running birds. Those that fly very far and swiftly have the largest and strongest wings. One bird that has very long wings can fly so fast that it is called the "Swift." The humming-bird, the smallest bird that lives, can move from one place to another as quickly as a flash of light or a glance of the eye. The ostrich is the largest and strongest of all birds, but his wings are small and he cannot fly. Because he needs to run so much his legs are long and strong, and his bones are nearly as solid as those of a horse, while the bones of most of the flying birds are full little air-cells that make them very light.

Did you ever stop to think why we see so many more birds in summer than in winter? When it is about time for the cold weather to begin many of them gather into companies and fly off south across sea and land to a warmer country. Then when the snow melts and the warm spring-time comes, back come our little friends as bright and happy as ever. A Swift has been known to come back to the very same spot every year for seven years. The pretty swallows and martins often do the same.

Look at the feathery clothing of the birds. What can be more light, more dainty, and more beautiful? One bird has a jaunty cap on his little head, another a ruff round his neck, still another a white puff about his legs. One wears a soft inner garment of delicate down, and an overcoat of hair, another waddles along in greased coat, caring neither for rain nor a plunge in the brook. This little fellow still wears his baby clothes, while that one looks as proud in his new suit as a boy does in his first trousers; for birds get new suits once in a while as well as you. The Bird of Paradise is dressed very handsomely, and is more careful of its clothes than some children, for it will not allow a speck of dirt to get on them.

How busy they are! These are holding a grand concert. Those are having some kind of meeting. Yonder we see them fishing, hunting, butchering or diving. Here and there a few are mining, hammering, weaving, sewing, making beds, plastering, or building houses. We notice that many are getting dinner, or talking, whistling, chattering, or warbling. One is tolling a bell so loud that it can be heard three miles away (its cry sounds like a bell tolling). Another is carrying real letters for his master, and still another is barking like the dog, mewing like the cat, and trying to make every sound that he hears anyone else make.



If you wonder how they can do so many different things, just look at their skillful tools. Those that need to wade in the water have stilts, those that swim have paddles, those that get their food out of the mud beneath the water have feelers and strainers in their bills, and those that eat soft food have spoons. The woodpecker has a drill and a worm-puller; the Kiwi-kiwi a staff, the humming-birds insect catchers, long, straight, curved, or double-curved, to fit the flowers in which they find the insects. The hawfinches have broad seed-crushers, the Cross Bills nut-catchers, the Tailor Bird a sharp, slender bill for a needle, the owls night eyes. The Jungle Fowl has great feet for shovels, and the Jacana very long, slender toes for water that enable him to walk on shoes, floating leaves. The longer you study them the more you will see that each bird has been given just the tools that he needs.

What wonderful houses they build! and in what strange places we sometimes find them! They generally have but one room, but that of the Paradise Whydah bird has two, one for the sitting-room and one for the nursery; and the Sociable Weavers weave great hotels out of flat reeds and grasses, with thatched roofs, which sometimes have as many as three hundred and twenty rooms, each containing a separate family of birds. The Golden Eagle has a neighbouring ledge of rock for his larder or pantry, where he keeps the food that he has brought until it is needed. The Jungle Fowl shovels up a mound or oven, sometimes fifteen feet high and sixty feet round, in which to keep its eggs warm. The Tailor Bird with its long bill and little feet makes thread out of cotton and sews the edges of two leaves together and then puts his nest in the little pocket he has thus made. The Oriole hangs in his nest from the branches of a tree and sews it together with horse hairs or strings. The Kingfisher makes his nest of fishbones, and the Esculent Swallow makes a nest that is thought to be very good to eat! The nest of the humming-bird is hung like a tiny cradle to a twig and it rocks back and forth with every breeze. What a cozy home with its silky walls and downy bed!

Birds kill so many insects, worms, mice, flies, snakes, etc., that they are a great help to the farmer and gardener. Their feathers make good beds and pillows, and the eggs of some are good for food. One ostrich egg is as large as twenty-four hen's eggs, and the shell is so strong that it is used to carry water in. See if you can think of anything else for which birds are useful.

The same One who made the water animals of which we learned last week, made these wonderful birds. And He made them on the same day that He made the water animals. Can you tell, now, when the birds began to live, and who made them? This same wise, loving Being who made and clothed and gave tools to the birds, teaches them how to use their tools, and He scatters their food over the earth for them to gather. He says that He does not forget one little sparrow, and therefore we need not fear that He will forget us, for we are worth more than many sparrows. Let us always think of this precious promise when we look at the little birds.

1. Did you ever live in the country?
2. Did you ever travel on the ocean?
3. What friends do we find wherever we go?
4. What kind of place would this earth be if there were no birds? Why?

5. How many kinds of birds are there?—Flying birds and running birds.
6. Name two birds that can fly very fast.
7. Name one that cannot fly.
8. Why can the Swift fly better than the ostrich?
9. What is the smallest bird that lives? The largest?
10. What kind of bones do the flying birds have? Why?
11. Why do we see so many more birds in summer than in winter?
12. Who guides them over sea and land every year to the same spot where they were reared?
13. What kind of clothing do birds wear?
14. What may little boys and girls learn from the Bird of Paradise?
15. What strange things do some birds do?
16. What birds can be taught to carry letters?—Carrier Pigeons.
17. What wonderful thing can the Parrot do? The Mocking Bird? The Tailor Bird?
18. Tell about some of the tools that birds have.
19. In what kind of houses do they live?
20. Where do we find these nests?
21. Who builds them?
22. Out of what are they made?
23. What are birds good for?
24. Who made these wonderful creatures? Gen. 1:20-23.
25. When? How? Gen. 2:19.
26. Who gave them their tools and taught them how to use them?
27. Who covers the earth with food for them to gather? Matt. 6:26.
28. Then need we fear that He will forget to care for us?
29. Why not? Matt. 6:26; 10:29-31.