

Chicopee Ahead With Bird Stations

By GERTRUDE RACINE

CHICOPEE — A sudden, unexpected flash of brilliant color; the early morning chirping or the late afternoon full song; these are the joys provided by our birds, which are so often taken for granted.

Try to envision, if you can, a day without the birds' sweet song. Yet, too few of us take the few minutes necessary each day to ensure these simple joys.

The Chicopee Conservation Commission has taken a giant step this winter, by installing feeders in several sections of the city. As a sad commentary on our times, the sites of the feeders will remain known to just a few for fear that vandals will derive an odd satisfaction from destroying these feeding stations.

Choose Feeders

Each year the commission is allotted funds for such projects in conservation as they wish to undertake and this winter's project is the feeders. They were constructed by a commission member, Les Fournier, who is also a member of the National Audubon Society.

Each is about five feet high with a tapered chute that empties onto a screen, where the birds feed. Each is set 18 inches off the ground.

Each feeder holds a capacity of 150 pounds; and locally, the birds are given a mixture of cracked corn, sunflower seed, peanuts, red and white millet and wheat. This mixture is to draw a variety of birds and to satisfy their needs.

Weekly Checks

Fournier has also taken on the task of making a weekly check on all the feeders to be certain that the mixture stays at the proper proportions and that the pressure is maintained so that the feed will go down through the chute properly and be available to the birds.

Last month Fournier participated in the annual Audubon Society Christmas bird count at the Chicopee feeders and was rewarded by seeing evening grosbeaks, cardinals, white-breasted nuthatches, black-capped chickadees, mourning doves, fox sparrows, bluejays and a variety of other sparrows.

Lecture Program

The commission members are currently working on a slide-lecture project, which, hopefully, will be available to social, civic and fraternal groups in the near future. The program will deal with



CHOW TIME FOR THE BIRDS—Max Zielinski, a member of the Chicopee Conservation Commission, fills a hopper with feed for birds who find it difficult to fend for themselves in the winter. The hopper has a capacity of 150 pounds and is one of many in the vicinity of the Chicopee Country Club off Burnett Road.

various phases of the conservation program and slides are being made by the members on their own time and at their own expense.

The commission is also looking at several properties in the city, which are comparatively remote and unsuitable for building purposes, with hopes of someday turning them into sanctuaries.

Must Be Maintained

Area residents are encouraged to start their own feeding stations to both preserve the birds we have and to encourage others to stay with us. Wild bird seed

is available at nominal cost in most markets and most people have a small area which can be kept clear of snow for ground feeding.

Once the project is started it must be continued faithfully for the birds soon are lured from their natural feeding grounds and "expect" to be fed daily.

It is a truly rewarding hobby. On a dark, dismal winter day what could be more beautiful than a brilliant red cardinal or a startling blue, black and white bluejay? Even the lowly, unloved starling can be a thing

of beauty with the male's iridescent blue, black and green head and throat coloring.

Ensure Future

If we treat our birds kindly during the winter, they will repay us this summer by keeping down the insect population and feeding on the seeds of nuisance weeds. Who knows maybe some day they will eliminate crab-grass?

The commission chairman is Lawrence Briere. Other members in addition to Fournier are Max Zielinski, Carl Pennington and Harold Thompson.