

Birds Think They Own A Garden

By ELIZABETH LAWRENCE

A new edition of Elizabeth Clarkson's *Birds of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County* has been published for the benefit of the Mecklenburg Audubon Society, and is available at the Charlotte Nature Museum.

It is the same as the 1965 edition (now out of print) except for some new dates for the arrival and departure of winter and summer visitors, and the addition of a pattern and instructions for making a wood duck box.

I am sorry to have misled some readers when I wrote about the *Chapman's Handbook*. I didn't think to say that the illustrations are not in color.

In a chapter on Aids to Bird Study, Elizabeth lists several books showing the birds in color, and says that Roger Tory Peterson's *Field Guide to the Birds* will probably prove to be the most useful one for identification. *A Guide to Bird Watching* by Joseph Hickey is a good book on bird study.

And you will find excellent keys and pictures of bird nests in Dr. A. A. Allen's *Ornithology Laboratory Notebook*, and in his *Book of Bird Life*. You'll find pictures of certain species of bird eggs in *Birds of America*, edited by Dr. T. Gilbert Pearson. *Chapman's Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America* describes the nests when it describes the birds and is always a standard in its information. About a hundred species nest in Mecklenburg County.

In the preface Elizabeth says the pamphlet covers her own records from 1932 through July 1970, and includes the records of many other people. About 130 species have been recorded in her own garden at Wing Haven, and these are marked by an asterisk

Ever since the second edition was published (in 1965) I have kept records on the blank pages at the back, of the birds in my garden — summer, winter, and permanent residents — checking them with Elizabeth's lists.

I never seem to see any transients — or perhaps I don't recognize them. I find

that bird records add greatly to the interest of a garden, even though mine are sketchy.

I am not a bird watcher, but in the neighborhood of Wing Haven all birds look upon all gardens as their personal property, and all gardeners as their slaves.

Sometimes when young birds are being taught to fly I am not allowed in the garden at all, and when I am attacked by a catbird I feel like Alice in Wonderland when the pigeon flew in her face, and called her a serpent. Perhaps the catbirds think I am a serpent.

Winter residents, having no domestic cares, are more tolerant. I have never learned to recognize individuals, but I like to think that the pair of kinglets that winter with me are the same ones each year.

This winter they appeared on the first day of November. I had gone out to cut some branches of camellia *saluenensis* when they suddenly confronted me, and darted from bush to bush looking me over to see how much I had aged since last May.

This seems to be a habit of theirs.

Rose Wharton says she went out to feed doughnuts, peanut butter, and sunflower seed to the chickadees, and found a kinglet staring at her as he balanced on a twig of Carolina jessamine. And as he turned his head she could see his crowning glory.

"It's not ruby," she said, "— too much yellow in it, but it's not orange, its more tangerine. I knew he had been around for years and have been waiting to identify him by his crown."

Only the male kinglet has the red crest, and Chapman describes it as partly concealed.

Caroline Dorman says he raises it only when frightened or irritated, so Rose's kinglet must have been mad with her for feeding chickadees. Chapman says the kinglets' song is beautiful — mellow and flute-like — but it does not sing in winter.

My pair have a disconcerting way of whispering. I have a feeling they are discussing me and that what they have to say is not flattering.