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PROFESSOR

NATUREBUG

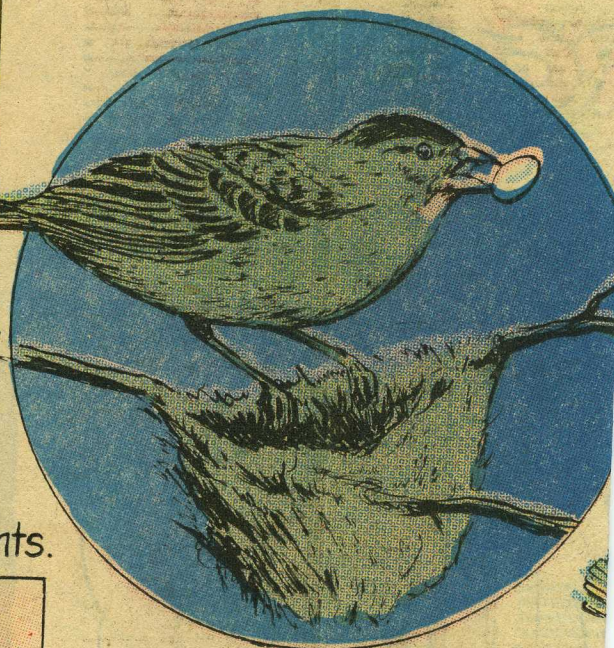
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Illustrated By John Hazlett



The COWBIRD, a member of the black-bird family, is well known as a parasite as regards nesting habits: it lays its eggs in the nests of other birds, leaving the care of its offspring to the foster-parents.

For many years, biologists had believed that the damage to the host species was negligible. Had not parasite and host lived amicably for centuries?

No, they had not, at least as regards eastern North America is concerned. As Harold Mayfield, Toledo naturalist, pointed out in 1960, in his book, THE KIRTLAND WARBLER, Cowbirds were originally native to the short-grass prairies of the west, where they followed herds of bison.



Female Cowbird removing egg of host before laying one of her own.

When the settlers cleared the forests, creating "artificial prairies," the Cowbirds spread eastward, arriving in Ohio after 1835.

