

BUSH-TIT.

Comparatively few people are acquainted with the bush-tit, our little weaver bird of the West. <sup>Bird common about Portland</sup> Among birds the bush-tit is a born master-builder, for he builds a real bird mansion. It's not a small matter to get a site suited for a bush-tit's home. There should be one or two firm up-right twigs about which to weave the walls, a cross branch or two for rafters, and, if the house is to be modern, a little support for a porch or promenade. Contrary to our first maxim of architectural success, these little builders begin at the top and build down first the round entrance, then a hallway to the living room.

Anybody would fall in love with a bush-tit. The fluffy midget does not possess the aerial grace of a swallow, or even the nimbleness of a warbler. He bustles along in such a jerky way, he often looks as if he would topple heels over head and go whirling to the ground like a tailless kite. But he is a skilled hunter. He skirmishes every tree and bush. (He is not so successful a wing-shot as a flycatcher but he has an eye that few can beat in stalking. He is no mean assistant of the gardner. He is not the kind that hoes a whole garden in a day, cutting off half the new tender shoots, but he is at work early and late and he is constantly at it.)

We kept run of bush-tit affairs for several days after the young had hatched. The father fed the nestlings as often as the mother. He generally paused on the fern-tops just below the nest. The real drama of life came when the youngsters were fluttering, full-grown, vigorous, impatient to get one glimpse



at the outside world from where the mother and father came so often with morsels. We had watched and waited, two weeks for this day. The minute one nestling took the idea into his head to get out into the sunshine, it spread like contagion among the whole household. The round door poured out young birds with the rapidity of a Gatling gun shooting in every direction at once, and bullets could hardly be any more difficult than the youngsters were to find. After a great deal of hunting, we found five of the midgets and put them back on a twig beside their nest where they sat fluffing in the warm sunshine enjoying their first outing.

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It must have been the same pair that built a nest the following year in a willow tree a few feet down the path. We didn't find the nest till after the young birds had hatched. The parents were carrying in food but they didn't dare go near the home at first for fear we'd see it. A titmouse might make twenty resolutions not to trust a person and the very next instant he'd throw himself and all his hopes right into your arms.

I stood almost in reach of the nest. The little lover looked me over from all sides. Then as a final test, he popped right into the round door. He knew I would make a grab at him, nest and all. He was out in a twinkle. He looked amazed, for I didn't move. That was his test of friendship and from that time he gave his confidence.

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I don't know why they gave us such implicit trust, unless the fluffy, gray midgets only remembered the kindnesses of our race, not the evils. When the young bush-tits were grown



they were easily tamed. They perched on our fingers and our heads and the parents alighted wherever they found their children.

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Some people think birds differ from each other in size and dress only. But to one who has studied long and carefully at the homes of different species, each feathered creature has a real character of its own. I can <sup>might</sup> give you the scientific name and a cut-and-dried description of the bush-tit, but what does that mean? It is all right for a city directory. You don't know a bush-tit any more when you have discovered him with your field glass and identified him in your bird manual, that you do a man when you are introduced to him and shove his card in your pocket. Each bird has a real individuality. Each is different in character and disposition.

OLD MOTTO - NEW INTERPRETATION  
PROOF - Bird in the hand worth several on the bush.

Another picture to show *tameas*. old bird feeding on cup.

OUT

OUT

Millions of destructive insects lay their eggs, live and multiply in the buds and bark of trees, and it seems to be the bush-tit's life work to keep this horde of insects in check. After the little family left their home, I never found them quiet for a minute. When they took possession of a tree, they took it by storm. It looked as if it had suddenly grown wings, and every limb was alive. They turned every leaf, looked into every cranny, and scratched up the moss and lichens. They hung by their toes to peek into every bud, they swung around the branches to pry into every crack, then, in a few moments, they tilted off to the next tree to continue the hunt.