

## Birds of the Golf Course

### The Kingbird

By W. L. McAtee

Kingbird is a big name for a bird, especially for one that is only eight inches long, but the so-called bee martin deserves it not for lording it over the rank and file of birds of about its own size, but for courageously challenging and driving away all predatory birds, including the largest hawks, some of which exceed it a hundred times in bulk. Farmers not too much impressed with the kingbird's fondness for honeybees (of which it eats mainly drones) encourage the birds to remain on their premises for the good they do in protecting

poultry from hawks. The kingbird's sentry duty benefits all of its wild avian neighbors also and makes it a desirable species for any place where large numbers of birds are wanted.



THE KINGBIRD

Appearing black (although chiefly dark gray) above, and white below, the kingbird is a very trim fellow. As ornaments, the tip of the tail is white, and a usually concealed patch on the crown varies from orange to vermillion. The bird breeds in all but the southwestern states, where the Arkansas kingbird, very similar in appearance and habits, takes its place.

One of the fly-catcher family, birds which customarily take their prey in the

air, launching forth from favorite perches and seizing their food with a distinct snap of the bill, the kingbird, furthermore, does not hesitate to come to earth for victims. Thus it obtains a greater variety of food, and on golf courses which it likes, if apple, plum, or thorn trees for its nests are available, it feeds upon many of the insects that the greenkeeper constantly must fight.

About nine-tenths of the kingbird's food is composed of insects, and the remainder chiefly of wild fruits, of which those of blackberry, cherry, elder, sassafras, and grape are most often eaten. The bird takes many of the dung beetles and their relatives which burrow

into greens, including such well known pests as white grubs, the green June beetle, and the Japanese beetle. Digging wasps and bees also are on its bill-of-fare. Such miners in turf as wireworms, clover-root borers, and leather-jackets (larvae of crane-flies), and such grass eaters as leaf-hoppers, cutworms, and other caterpillars, and grasshoppers, also are devoured. Ants, nuisances everywhere but especially so on putting greens, are freely eaten by the kingbird, probably mostly on the wing when they are flying to new points of infestation.

The kingbird does well, as it also looks well, on the golf course, and should always be protected.

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## **The Most Prevalent Defect in American Golf Courses**

By Maynard M. Metcalf

I do not know European golf courses, but have studied 86 in North America and 13 in South and Central America. Almost nowhere have I seen at all adequate provision of practice ground and proper facilities for the giving of lessons.

Practice ground of sufficient size and proper character for driving, for short and long approaching by run up, pitch and run, or dead-stop shots, for shots out of sand traps and out of rough and for putting should be provided in connection with every course which is designed to train good golfers; and ground for lessons with open-front rain shelters for instruction should also be provided.

Members will not practice enough if they have to use the course itself for this purpose. They feel that they are in the way and are a nuisance and they know it is irritating to themselves in practice to be constantly interrupted by players. For the training of good golfers practice is at least equally important with play. It should be encouraged by providing abundant room with opportunity for trying out all kinds of shots.

It isn't quite reasonable to deprive instructors and players of opportunity for lessons in rainy weather. High, open-front sheds can be built very cheaply and will enable the golf instructor to continue his work on mildly rainy days, a benefit to his own purse and a decided advantage to the players.

It seems strange that nearly all golf courses are lacking in practice ground, in ground for lessons, in teaching sheds, or usually in all three. Probably the provision of these facilities in our clubs would do more than anything else of similar cost to improve American golf.

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## **Variation from Standard Practice**

"In the past three years I have used approximately 1,000 yards of topdressing; each year the amount has diminished materially as the putting surface improved. During the growing season I use about a yard of topdressing at each application. I do not go by any set rule as to how often I topdress for I know my soil condition and topdress when necessary. Some of my greens are topdressed nearly twice as often as others, occasionally going as long as seven weeks without showing the need of topdressing."—C. M. MELVILLE, *Greenkeeper, Southmoor Country Club, Chicago, Ill.*