

Birds have been friends of man for centuries

By ART BRIGGS-JUDE
 Man's association with birds dates back as much as 30,000 years. Since primitive times, humans have gathered bird's eggs, taken their flesh for food, and utilized their bones for tools and weapons. Even the bird's feathers were used for flinging arrows and in ceremonial rites. In many parts of the world, birds were worshipped, and sometimes followed. Early fishermen, for example, watched with interest the seabird's activities, then moved in with their nets to reap a finny harvest. Our own North American Indians copied the actions of the prairie chicken and other species, incorporating these movements in their ritual dances. These same native peo-

ple, like the Romans, held the eagle in high esteem. Ancient civilizations etched bird drawings in caves, on pyramids, rocks and trees, in some corner of every continent. Mankind has continually looked to the birds for inspiration, service and pleasure. From the day Noah first released the dove to bring him information on flood levels, people have used similar species for communications, racing competitions and marksmanship. The ancient art of falconry was not only practiced for sport, but often as a means of procuring food. Likewise, the Japanese utilized the diving abilities of the cormorant to obtain fish for eating purposes. The behaviour of birds has long

been noted as a means of forecasting the weather. Then too, migratory flights indicated a change of seasons could be expected. The story of coal mining could never be complete without a chapter on the canary. For it was these and other similar cage birds that served to warn the underground workers of the presence of lethal gas. Birds have long been a source of profit to mankind, often adding much to the economy of certain areas. The guana deposits of Peru provide a good example of this, as does the collecting of eider duck down along the northern Atlantic coasts. The cage bird industry had flourished for centuries in India, Europe, and the Orient before arriving in the

Americas with the early settlers. Traditional hunting practices in the new world also resulted in the establishment of pay-as-you-go hunting areas. Annual shoots such as the famous Pelee Island pheasant hunt has been big business for many years while the game farm concept is now well established in most parts of Ontario. Probably the greatest impact birds had on man was when he domesticated the red jungle fowl some time before 2000 B.C. These tame fowl were soon spread to all parts of the known world. Between the time Christ was born and the Roman invasion of the British Isles, the chicken had become a poultry bird in England. Its laying output of some sixty eggs a year was far

short of the modern day hen that may lay more than 250 eggs in the same period. On this continent the North American turkey has had a similar association with humans. Fourteen hundred years ago the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and Arizona kept gobblers in captivity, while during the time of Columbus, selective breeding had already produced an all-white strain. It would seem from the above information that each and every one of us is a birdwatcher, whether we admit it or not. And it matters very little, for instance, if you go afield with glass or gun, or merely look from the window to see what your seed offering has enticed. For you see, even keeping an eye on the progress of

a roasting turkey or a barbecuing chicken immediately labels the observer as a bona-fide birdwatcher. In such cases the last thing you want to end up with is a rare specimen. TIPS & CLIPS: Those yellow and black evening grosbeaks are beginning to appear at local feeders; A flying squirrel came to our seed shelf one night last week.

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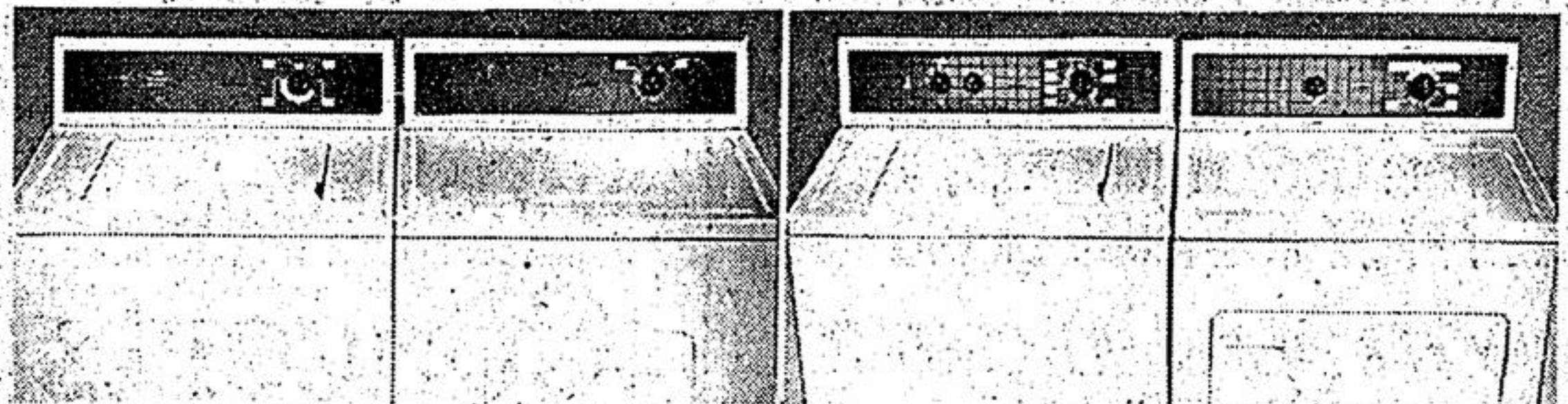


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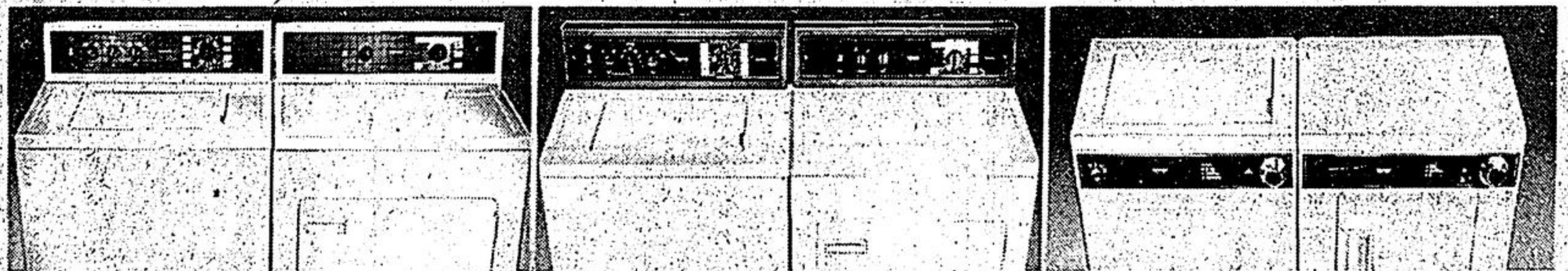


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