

This Week's Guest Writer

Miss Mary Linda Bradley began her rendezvous with the Southwest in 1920, and since the last war has spent considerable time in Alpine, her home being in Ridgefield, Connecticut. She was the first woman in Arizona in 1930 to own a plane and the third woman in that state to receive her pilot's license. Miss Bradley writes poetry, two volumes of which have been published, and has written adventure stories and articles for newspapers and magazines.

Christmas Trees in April

If anyone had told me before I met Alpine that 70 different birds could be identified as visitors and residents in our half acre, I would have been polite but uninterested. Now, I am not always polite—about grabbing the field glasses—and the birds both interest and border my life, like the illumination on some old parchment.

That is why, since this April, we are on the watch for the winged decorations that flicker and flash on the yard's trees.

I call our most vivid company the Bright Birds. To name a few: the Western Tanager, Bullock's Oriole, the Blue Jay and the California Jay, the Western Blue Bird, the Lazuli Bunting and—once only—the rare Painted Bunting. The King Bird with his wing-lining of lemon yellow is very welcome.

There have been as many as 30 Robins in the yard at one time; at another, I have counted 50 doves. The Crested Phainopepla, with glossy black coat and wings that seem to whirl like lacy propellers from the contrasting white patches, is among the ten best-dressed visitors.

For faithful appearance, the neat little Oregon Juncos with their dark hoods are popular. I have nick-named them "the little Padres."

This year, we have had two "incidents"—unlike the variety staged by Stalin and his stooges—that I would like to include. The voracious innocent villain of the first was the Red Naped Sapsucker, who gouged the trunk of the old Acacia by my west window, from dawn to dusk.

The sap must have been worth a bird singing commercial, because one hopeful hummingbird took up his orbit around the tree and when the Red Nape withdrew for a "breather," the hummer rushed to the cracks and holes and satisfied his thirst till Red Nape returned.

Then, amusingly, the sparrows came to the feast and tried to hover like tiny jeweled helicopters! At this point, I began to be worried about the poor Acacia, which was trying to become a golden tent, but was losing too much sap! So, ruthlessly, we decided to bind its wounds with friction-tape. The free lunch was over!

One of my helpful squires reported a Nuttall Sparrow with a damaged wing. The little thing could scoot like a quail, but he could not fly. During six weeks or more I have watched for that plucky, jaunty feathered casualty, and put food for him on the ground. He has won my respect. The north yard is fenced from the south yard. If Mr. Nuttall wants to transfer himself, he makes a big hop to the lowest Acacia twig, takes a counter-hop; to the wire fencing and—like a boxer bouncing off the ropes—reaches a higher Acacia spray, repeating until

he can find the branch that droops over the fence, like a birds' main street, into the southern yard.

He lands on his little striped head, if he tries to jump down more than a foot. He is a lesson in courage and adaptability—bless him!

In fact, when I wake to the sound of a cappella music, and locate nearby a dozen meadowlarks at matins, and hear the counterpoint of quail in the brush across the fields, I can realize that "my cup runneth over" and that the Creator "restoreth my soul" for the new day.

Mary Linda Bradley