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English Nightingales (*Luscinia megarhyncha*).

By S. Harvey.

30th June, 1936.

For years it has been an ambition of mine to have a pair of English Nightingales. In June, 1935, a pair was imported and arrived in good condition, with exception of soiled feathers. I considered myself very fortunate to land them, especially as other hardy birds did not survive the trip. I had been warned on no account to put them together, as one would be sure to kill the other, so they were kept in separate cages in the bird-room for two months. On fine days they were given a fly in one of the breeding aviaries for a few hours, but not together. This way of keeping Nightingales did not appeal to me, so after getting them into good condition during the two months, they were let out into the finches' aviary (between the breeding aviaries) and remained there for the next three months. During this time they were watched closely in case they commenced fighting. They did not appreciate each other's company, as soon as one went near the other there was trouble, but nothing serious; they soon separated and were then quite all right. I was not satisfied to leave them in this aviary, and at the end of November they were turned out into the large aviary with the hedge in it (98 feet by 30 feet by 12 feet high); this was an anxious time, wondering if they would find their food and how they would be with the other birds. They took up positions one each end of the hedge, and it was well over a week before they were seen again; occasionally they were heard to give their warning (Krrrr). After a time we could go along the

hedge and find the hen within a space of twenty feet at her end, but the cock could never be found, only heard. After about two months they were seen flying out of the hedge on to a tree and then back to the hedge. As time went on they gradually became tamer, and now the hen will settle on my hand and take a mealworm and then fly to the other end of the aviary to eat it; she usually does this four times and then appears satisfied, remaining at the far end. When I enter the aviary she flies straight towards me in line with the face, and then when three or four feet away turns to one side or flies overhead and perches nearby and waits for a mealworm. The cock usually follows the hen, but turns off when about twelve feet away. When it came to June, and these birds had been with me for twelve months, and the cock had not been heard to sing, I began to wonder if he would ever commence, and then on 20th June in the afternoon his song was heard for the first time. Since then he has been singing each day, mostly in the morning, between 7.30 and 9.30. So far he has not been heard to sing at night.

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