

A number of geologists have studied this rock formation in Fiji and the writings of all are in general agreement with the statements made above. It would seem, therefore, that, instead of being engulfed in a stream of hot, lava-like mud, the egg in question was buried near shore by fine sediments brought down by streams or worn from the coast by waves. How the egg reached the sea is another question. The chances of its being washed into a river unbroken are slight—which may account for the rarity of fossil eggs.

In his title Dr. Wood states that the rocks are post-Tertiary in age, later he mentions the existence of the Tertiary ocean at the time the rocks were formed; at still another point he states that the “. . . age of the fossil . . . is quite speculative.” The last statement seems best to fit the known facts as recent workers are not in agreement regarding the age of the Suva “soapstone.” Certainly the beds are no older than late Tertiary and they may be referable to the Pleistocene or Recent periods. At the present time the writer is studying fossils collected from the formation with the hope of settling the question.

Very sincerely yours,

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Suva, Fiji,

February 15, 1926.

Nature-wasters and Sentimentalists.

Editor of 'The Auk':

Mr. Carey's letter in your last number (pp. 275-276), relating the wholesale killing of Hawks in Delaware and New Jersey, is of peculiar interest. Unfortunately, the slaughter of birds of prey is not confined to those states, nor is its encouragement limited to sportsmen's magazines. In my own state, Alabama, the very agency that should protect these birds is operating for their destruction. Three years ago, the new Commissioner of Conservation promulgated a state-wide "Hawk-killing week." Protests availed nothing. This year he inaugurated another and more sweeping "anti-vermin campaign," beginning February 22 and continuing through March, and made these statements in the press:

"Any campaign against vermin which prey upon our protected game birds and animals in this state must necessarily be a voluntary activity on the part of the friends of wild life of Alabama. There is no bounty provided by statute and therefore the state can make no awards. It is expected, however, that sporting goods houses, game protective associations, conservation clubs and individuals will put up prizes or awards to be given to individuals and clubs for work accomplished in the destruction of vermin."

Such organized slaughter demands an immediate and vigorous counter campaign of education if we are to save many of our raptorial species from extinction. But deplorable as is this state of affairs, we should not

allow the pendulum to swing too far in the opposite direction. Some conservationists are so blinded by sentimentalism that they become as extreme as the nature-wasters, and would absolutely prohibit all bird-shooting, even for purposes of scientific investigation. These sentimentalists ignore the significant facts that bird protection in America originated with the A. O. U., and that the arguments which secured the passage of our protective laws were based on the researches of the ornithologist. They are in the same case with people who bend every effort to prevent experimentation with live animals, yet do not hesitate to accept the benefits of serums and vaccines. The nature-wasters are at least consistent.

Now, there is ample evidence that birds which have adapted themselves to habitat changes incident to agriculture and lumbering are in no danger of extermination. Before the days of such organized, systematic killing as just described, there was no appreciable scarcity of Hawks and Owls in my section of the country, notwithstanding that for generations they have been pariahs with the farmers. Meadowlarks have ever been abundant on our home plantation, although not long ago they were legitimate game. Every member of my family was trained to shoot Bob-whites over a dog, yet the supply never failed. Our Bluebirds, Mockingbirds, and Thrashers have never been in actual need of statutory protection. And in spite of former raids on winter roosts of Robins, these birds have not only held their own, but have increased to abnormal numbers (McAtee, 'Bird-Lore,' 1926, 182).

This is not a brief for the removal of protection from any species, but these examples, which could be multiplied, do demonstrate the absurdity of the outcry over a few bird-skins. Except in special cases, such as the persecuted Crows and birds of prey, and birds of extremely restricted range, like the Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow, neither the ornithologist nor the legitimate sportsman, nor even the despised egg collector (I am one of them) can honestly be considered as a serious factor in the survival of the species. The real menace to bird-life lies in the destruction of special habitats, in the mania for draining every marsh and swamp, and for felling every forest. And to preserve intact an adequate number of wild places to insure the perpetuation of all existing species should be task enough to satisfy even the most zealous of conservationists.

By all means let us demand protection for the birds of prey, as well as for all other birds that need it, but amid the clamor for rights it should be remembered that the ornithologists also are entitled to some consideration. Between the sentimentalists and the nature-wasters we seem to be placed as "between the devil and the deep blue sea," for one would stop our collecting by process of law, while the other would leave us nothing to collect.

Very sincerely yours,
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