

## CORRESPONDENCE.

## Alleged Excessive Collecting.

November 13, 1934.

Editor of 'The Auk':

As a pertinent addition to the letter of the Marquess of Tavistock, published, together with a reply by myself, in your issue of July 1934, I trust you will give space to the appended communication by the Marquess of Tavistock which appeared in the 'Avicultural Magazine' for October 1934, page 272.

Sincerely yours,

FRANK M. CHAPMAN.

## THE AMERICAN WHITNEY EXPEDITION.

"I am relieved to hear that the collecting methods of the Whitney Expedition were less destructive than I had been led to believe. Possibly our member who gave me the information may have something to say in reply, particularly in regard to alleged collecting on islands for which permits had been refused.

I must say I still think that the number of Masked Parrakeets taken was unnecessary and excessive.<sup>1</sup>

In regard to obtaining material for museums from birds bred in captivity, it is a common error of ornithologists who are not aviculturists to suppose that birds reared in confinement at once show such aberrations and abnormalities as to render them useless for purposes of scientific study. As a matter of fact, it takes several generations of captivity breeding before the slightest variation from the wild type begins, and an immensely long period before the original type is swamped and lost by the domestic variations."

(Signed) TAVISTOCK.

## Preservation of Species in Aviaries.

Editor of 'The Auk':

The letter from the Marquess of Tavistock which was printed in the July 1934 issue of 'The Auk' contains reference to a movement concerning which we have heard only from sponsors and not at all from critics. The proposal referred to is that of bringing specimens of Parakeets, now rare in the wild, to the aviaries of southern California with a view to perpetuating the species in captivity.

It certainly seems to some friends of birds that such a move would result only in further diminution in number of the species concerned, for with few exceptions birds do not continue to breed indefinitely in aviaries. Caging birds is one of the most effective ways of using them up and in most cases is either directly or indirectly a drain upon the wild supply. The wonder is that any countries are so complaisant as to permit continued exploitation of their avifaunas for the cage-bird trade. Certainly, if all were as strict in their requirements as is the United States, cage-bird traffic would amount to only a fraction of its present volume and would cease to be a threat to the continued natural existence of rare species.

<sup>1</sup> In view of the Marquess's implication that this species may have been exterminated by the Whitney Expedition, it is interesting to note that in 'Aviculture' for November, 1934 (p. 15) he writes: "The Masked Parrakeet, as I have already said, has been almost exterminated by fruit growers and by the depredations of the imported mongoose."—F. M. C.

Furthermore, as Dr. F. M. Chapman points out in his rejoinder to the Marquess' letter, birds reared in captivity are no longer true representatives of the wild species, witness blue Budgerigars and white Java Sparrows. If all the survivors of a certain rare form were caged, their descendants (provided breeding occurred and the young were reared) in a few generations probably would depart from natural conformation and color to such an extent as not to be typical of the species. The latter would then be almost as truly extinct as if the last individual had perished in the wild.

The place to save threatened species is in their native range and it would seem that efforts to preserve them can best be directed toward the provision of absolute sanctuaries fully adequate in size and in number—a matter in which the parent country, not another, should be the most vitally interested.

W. L. McATEE,  
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Oct. 1, 1934.