

owl was a female. The eggs held small embryos. Here is a romance for those who choose, or a biological question for those who wish to speculate. At least it is interesting as the only departure I have ever known from the Elf Owl's regular habit of nesting in the sahuaro cactus, many of which were within half a mile and eminently suitable, as we found when collecting among them the next day.

*Farmingdale, Long Island, New York, April 18, 1923.*

## HOW IS THIS FOR CONSERVATION OF WILD LIFE?

By JOSEPH MAILLIARD

IN Natural History (Journal of the American Museum of Natural History), vol. 23, no. 1, January-February, 1923, appears an article by Rollo H. Beck, entitled "The Voyage of the 'France': A Later-day Trip to the Scene of the Bounty Mutiny and to Other Islands of the South Pacific."

In his account of this voyage Mr. Beck says, on page 40: "In the way of birds Henderson [Island] yielded a rail, a dove and a warbler, as well as the usual sea birds, but travel over the island proved so difficult that most of our collecting was necessarily done near shore. . . . *The last three goats*<sup>1</sup> purchased for food in Rapa *we liberated on Henderson*, but they chose to remain close to the landing place until our departure. Future visitors should have less trouble than we cutting trails through the tangled vines and shrubbery if the goats use their freedom to good advantage in nibbling their way to the interior." Yet, on the next page, he says: "On one of the small uninhabited islands where goats were kept, *the surprising capture of a rail was made*. There was hardly any cover on the island for a bird with the ordinary habits of the rails as we knew them in Polynesia, but a few had managed to exist in spite of the destruction of the vegetation." Again, on page 43, Beck says: "After cleaning the vessel and getting a fresh stock of provisions we headed out to the eastward to visit other unknown atolls and secure *before their extermination* examples of their dwindling fauna."

It seems almost incredible that such a veteran collector as Rollo H. Beck, in the employ of one of the best known museums in the world, should have done what he evidently knew must mean the ultimate extermination of certain species of birds, and most probably of other and interesting forms of animal and plant life! His own words, quoted above, prove that he knew this from previous experience, and yet he deliberately established upon Henderson Island the machinery to produce such a deplorable result.

It hardly appears reasonable to assume that the three goats liberated were non-breeders, for the reason that on a tropical island of such an extent as this, it being about five miles long by two and one-half miles wide, such a limited

<sup>1</sup>The italics are mine, here and below.

number as three goats would make but little impression on the growth of the "tangled mass of vines and shrubbery," mentioned as being such a barrier to the progress of an explorer.

If it turns out that these three goats were non-breeders, no harm has been done, and I shall be glad to offer my apologies to Mr. Beck for the appearance of this paper, which will then be of no use unless as a warning to others who might be inclined to adopt the 'goat' method of preparing islands for future exploration.

*California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, March 30, 1923.*

## ADDITIONAL NOTES FROM THE COASTAL ISLANDS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

By DONALD R. DICKEY and A. J. VAN ROSSEM

**T**HE FACT that our knowledge of insular birds must of necessity grow by fragmentary steps serves as the motive for the publication of the following notes, gathered by the authors during various trips to the coastal islands of southern California. Only those species for which new data have recently become available are touched upon, our intention being simply to add a further modicum to our understanding of the resident and visitant birds of these islands.

*Colymbus auritus* Linnaeus. Horned Grebe. A male of this species, taken January 6, 1920, at Camp Banning, Santa Catalina Island, constitutes, we believe, the first record for Santa Catalina. W. L. Dawson (*Condor*, xvii, 1915, p. 204) saw this species at Santa Cruz in late April, 1915, but took no specimens.

*Larus heermanni* Cassin. Heermann Gull. An adult female taken January 30, 1920, at Santa Catalina, has the aberrant white primary coverts recently noted in individuals of this species by various observers. A bird seen at Santa Catalina February 17, 1921, displayed this same conspicuous covert-pattern. The consensus of present opinion seems to regard this condition as merely an occasional mutation, or 'sport.' Just how sporadic the occurrence really is must be determined by further observation.

*Ardea herodias hyperonca* Oberholser. California Great Blue Heron. A juvenal male taken August 20, and an adult male taken August 21, 1922, at Prisoner's Harbor, Santa Cruz Island, give the following measurements:

	Wing	Tail	Tarsus	Middle toe without claw	Culmen
K 532, ♂ juv.	485	178	194	110	149
K 533, ♂ ad.	490	179	184	107	144

The measurements of these two birds, taken in conjunction with those of the San Clemente and Santa Catalina specimens recorded by A. B. Howell (*Pac. Coast Avif.* no. 12, 1917, p. 44), seem to cast such grave doubt upon the validity of *Ardea herodias oligista* as a separable insular race, distinguishable by mensural characters, that we prefer to allocate these island birds to the mainland race, *Ardea herodias hyperonca*.

*Fulica americana* Gmelin. Coot. A pair of coots, accompanied by several nearly grown young, was often seen about the tule-fringed pond at Prisoner's Harbor, Santa Cruz Island, from August 18 to 21, 1922. Although recorded in winter from the same locality (Linton, *Condor*, x, 1908, p. 126), there seems to be no previous breeding record for the islands.