

as distinct species. It is reassuring thus to find well-supported opposition to the present unfortunate tendency to reduce species which differ in relatively slight degree, but constantly, from one another, to subspecies of single species.

There has just appeared in the "Bulletin" series of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard College (vol. LXVI, pp. 1-209), Part I of "The Birds of the Lake Umbagog Region of Maine," by William Brewster. We are informed by Dr. Thomas Barbour that the manuscript for this posthumous contribution was left by its author in practically complete form—"almost absolutely ready for publication with hardly a change of a word or a comma." To those who were acquainted with the scholarly and painstaking work of William Brewster, this information comes as merely a corroboration of what we well knew to be his method. He did thoroughly whatever task he set for himself. It has long been known that Brewster's personal field interest centered for many years in the Lake Umbagog region of Maine, and that he was working toward a comprehensive account of the birds of that Boreal locality. There will be two further "parts" to complete his entire record. Brewster's own accurate observations are given in narrative form, in the excellent literary style for which his writings always were noted. Perusal of the accounts of species in Part I discloses a great deal of fact and philosophy new to our previous experience. In other words, we have here a contribution of real and lasting value. The only criticism that occurs to us is that the nomenclature has been "modernized" from the form in which doubtless it was left by Brewster. Brewster was himself conservative. He certainly would content himself, were he alive today, with the names as they stand on the A. O. U. Check-list. We hardly think he would subscribe, for instance, to "*Casmerodius alba egretta*" for the American Egret. The title page of the present "part" does not, unfortunately, give any indication as to who is responsible for such editorial emendations as the one just cited.

In the Saturday Evening Post of June 14, 1924, page 29, some one by the name of Kenneth L. Roberts includes in his vivacious and vivid word picture of the Pima desert of Arizona the following phrase: "gawky, long-necked, long-tailed black-and-white birds known as road runners

dash madly ahead of the traveler, or plunge hysterically from one side of the road to the other . . .". We wonder to what extent readers of THE CONDOR will approve of this characterization of the Road-runner. If the above excerpt is a fair sample of the whole article with respect to accuracy of fact, we once more "deplore" the low standard of "informational" literature offered to, and accepted by, the public.

## COMMUNICATIONS

### CROW-SHOOTING CONTESTS

Editor THE CONDOR:

As an old member of the Cooper Ornithological Club and an earnest and practical bird conservationist, may I enter a vigorous protest and dissent to the resolution passed at the meeting of the Northern Division on March 27 condemning the proposed campaign against Crows and other vermin now being instituted by the Du Pont Powder Company? While recognizing that the system advocated by that Company is not ideal, and that it is open to several points of objection, still it is at present the only means we have of combating the increasing menace of the Crow.

The antagonists of the scheme base their main objection on the supposed lawlessness of those taking part in the destruction of Crows during the closed season, and also they are averse to the "extermination" of the Crow. As Californians you probably know better than I do what the moral attributes and law-abiding capacity of your countrymen are, and to what extent your game wardens are capable of coping with the proposed situation; but in British Columbia where the system of organized shoots in the closed season directed against Crows and other vermin has been in practice for several years, no violations of the game laws have been reported, nor am I aware of a single case where game has been shot by any member of these contests during the closed season.

That there is the smallest possibility of the extermination of the Crow or of any species of mammal or bird against which the campaign is directed is too absurd to be discussed seriously. The utmost we can hope for is to keep their numbers down to a considerable extent.

Your resolution condemns the system for the whole continent, not as applied to your State alone. While California as a

whole is singularly free from Crows, still there are portions where both Crows and Magpies exist in thousands and are increasing, to the immense detriment of the game supply. But it is in other regions that the Crow menace is at its worst; in the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan the increase in the last 15 years is as 20 to 1. In August of 1922, on the Alberta-Saskatchewan boundary, I saw flocks of migrating Crows which were 200 yards wide and reached from horizon to horizon. Fifteen years ago Crows were scarce in this region.

In southern British Columbia we must reckon the Sharp-tailed Grouse as a vanishing bird, in spite of permanent closed seasons, unless we can cope with the increase of the Crow and Magpie. Our only means to effect this at present is by organized warfare against these pests, undertaken by every sportsman and everyone else who honestly has the interests of bird conservation at heart.

That the Dupont people are undertaking their scheme solely to increase their ammunition sales is hardly logical. The trapshooters who will leave their favorite pastime in thousands to help mitigate the Crow menace would expend more ammunition by far at the traps than they would at Crow shooting.

To summarize: Crows and Magpies are the worst enemies we have to contend with in an effort to increase our bird population and game supply. The most effective way to reduce these is by destroying them during their breeding season, the season that they do the most damage to game and other birds. At other seasons they are much more wary and difficult to destroy. The bounty system has been proved too expensive. There are no regular gamekeepers or vermin destroyers. This leaves as our only means of defense an organized and advertised system of warfare against these pests, which are increasing their range and numbers out of all proportion to the increase of any other birds.—ALLAN BROOKS, *Atlin, B. C., 12 June, 1924.*

#### WHO IS TRYING TO GET MY GOAT?

Editor THE CONDOR:

While conversing yesterday with the British High Commissioner for the Western Pacific he smilingly asked me to deposit no more goats on islands under his jurisdiction. I instantly assured him that I had no intention of so doing and had

committed the offense on but one occasion when, in the hope of benefiting future castaways, I had allowed my philanthropic instincts to overrule my gastronomic desires.

It appeared that an alarmed Briton living in England had recently written him, inquiring if he could send an expedition to Henderson Island, which lies some 3000 miles east of Fiji, to destroy a ravaging flock of goats, the nucleus of which I had placed there a couple of years ago. It further appears that the knowledge regarding the menacing character of the animals was gleaned from an article written in THE CONDOR a few months ago. I assume that THE CONDOR writer saw a descriptive attempt of mine in *Natural History*, a publication of the American Museum of Natural History, in which I mentioned placing three goats on Henderson, and I infer that my motive for depositing the livestock on the island has been entirely misunderstood.

To enlighten others whom it may concern, let me state the facts. The beasts were landed solely in the hope that the members of the next ship-wrecked crew that succeeded in getting ashore there would find living conditions easier than did the sailors of the wrecked ship *Essex*, two of whom lived to be rescued therefrom.

Possibly the mind of THE CONDOR scribe was fixed on the anticipated damage to the flora or fauna should the goats multiply to the extent that wild goats have done on other islands; but, I take it, he or she has visited but few tropical islands where wild goats have lived for decades and have merely succeeded in making a few trails and maintaining scattered cleared acres where the grass grows but a foot high instead of three feet or more.

Of the 20 or so islands where wild goats live, that I have hunted, but two showed serious damage to flora or fauna. On one of these, Guadalupe, off Lower California, the rainfall is evidently light and probably seasonal, while the other is of small extent, 100 acres or less, in the Gambier group.

On the other hand, the dry western side of Nukuhiva Island, in the Marquesas, where thousands of wild goats range, maintains a greater variety of bird-life in the goat-infested area than does the southern coast with its far more luxuriant vegetation, and though in the west some of the grasses are continually cropped no species shows a scarcity in number of individuals.