

instead of being personally vested in the recent president, Mr. Robertson, at Buena Park, is now to be exercised by the Association corporately from its Berkeley offices in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, whence application forms may be obtained. Three changes in the nature of the permit will be made on December 31, 1931. First, the old letter-size sheet will be replaced by a small printed card, much like the state and federal scientific collecting permits. Second, permits will cease to expire automatically at the end of the current year, but remain valid as long as no reason for revoke arises. Third, summarized returns, to be submitted to the W.B.B.A. on the regular schedule forms provided for the purpose, become official requirements, on a par with Federal returns, and failure to make such returns on or about the end of each calendar year, or to note on the same forms the reason for any temporary suspension of activities, results in the automatic cancellation of the permit. The latter provision, which lays the foundation for a great state collection of banding records, under the custodianship of the W.B.B.A., was believed to be of the greatest value in itself, and at the same time to make possible the convenience of unlimited permits, by forming a check on the considerable class of permittees whose activities are short-lived, but whose forgotten permits should not, from the point of view of the law-enforcement branch or those responsible for the proper conduct of banding, be scattered at large about the state.—WESTERN BIRD-BANDING ASSOCIATION.

CURRENT DISCUSSION

"PESTS" AND AGRICULTURE

In the May issue of *The Condor*, there appeared an article by Dr. Linsdale giving some rather startling facts concerning the use of poisons in destroying so-called pests. To those of us who have kept in touch with this situation during the past several years, it would now appear certain that much of California's wild life is doomed to early extinction from this cause. Whether or not our native fauna is of any value to this very materialistic age may be a debatable question. Certainly it is one that the public must soon settle, if indeed, it has not already been settled by indifference.

There is one angle of this matter of poisoning which has not received much attention in the press but which is the cause of considerable worry to the farming interests of this State. Pest destruction has or should have as its object the creating of conditions making possible the production of more crops usable as human food or as articles for sale or barter, with other countries. At the present time, however, the enormous expense of pest destruction cannot be justified from that standpoint. The words "surplus" and "overproduction" have been heard on every hand during the past few crop seasons and we have been given to understand that the present crisis in agriculture is due to a failure of the domestic and foreign markets to consume all of the farm products which have been harvested. Last year the Federal Farm Board was reported to have expended a sum in excess of one hundred million dollars for the purchase of surplus wheat. A few weeks ago press dispatches announced that this same agency had advised cotton growers to plow up a large part of the present cotton crop or else be prepared to accept ruinous prices if the entire acreage was allowed to mature. In the autumn of 1930 several thousand carloads of California grapes for which no market could be found were purchased by this same Federal agency or one of the Boards created by it. A vast amount of these grapes was allowed to hang on the vines throughout the entire fall and winter and to become the breeding place for sufficient insects and fungous diseases to keep the pest-destroying squads busy for many months. Numerous other examples of this sort could be mentioned if space permitted.

As previously stated, we are passing through a most disastrous agricultural crisis. Several major problems confront us—problems important enough to require the serious thought and effort of everyone. In the face of such conditions it is little wonder that our farmers are murmuring against the large number of overlapping organizations—some private and many official—which are at the present time assiduously attacking minor and relatively unimportant problems most of which, even though they might be completely solved, would still leave agriculture bankrupt and its major problems still to be worked out.

Most farmers, we believe, are fully aware of the fact that it is not the function of a County Inspector, a State Agent, or a paid poisoner of the Biological Survey to attack marketing problems; but it is not surprising, in the face of present conditions that a constantly growing demand is heard on every hand for the complete overhauling and reorganization of all State and Federal agricultural agencies and the reforming of all in such a manner as to make them sufficiently flexible to allow a massed attack on the real problems of the California farmers.

One example of the effect of misapplied zeal, and we will close.

A few years ago a great hue and cry went up in the interior valleys of this State over the reported great destruction of fruit buds by bird pests. Poisoning and shooting were resorted to. Bounties were paid (unofficially) according to press reports on over 300,000 birds. The success of the venture exceeded the fondest expectations of the promoters and full vindication of the wisdom of the plan came when the State Crop Reporting Service announced that some *ninety thousand tons* of peaches, alone, matured—then fell to the ground and rotted because there was no market for them!

These are trying times for our farmers. Thousands of them have lost not only their ranches but their homes as well. Other thousands are facing the same tragedy unless relief comes quickly. In the face of such conditions it is not an inspiring sight to witness great expenditures of money and man power along lines which have only the most remote connection with the solution of agriculture's major problems. Suggestions regarding moratoria seem to be coming from various sources regarding numerous issues, and there are many farmers who believe it is high time to call an immediate moratorium on the present overworked practice of expending funds on unnecessary measures—most of which had better be deferred, according to current belief, until our farmers have become financially able to carry such burdens.—JOHN G. TYLER, *Fresno, California, September 1, 1931.*

"MORE GAME BIRDS IN AMERICA, INC."

The Western Bird-banding Association has lately received the rather extensive

syllabus which outlines the program of "More Game Birds in America, Inc." for the inauguration of the shooter's Utopia into which the United States and Canada are to be transformed. Of the organization in question the present document tells us nothing, but we understand that it consists of a heavily-backed, largely eastern, group who are prepared to launch, and indeed have launched, a large-scale campaign of education, research and propaganda leading to the end which their vision depicts.

It goes almost without saying that increased *protection* is to have no part in the matter, which is to be removed entirely from the inadequate hands of Mother Nature. *Propagation*, rather, is the word to conjure with, and it is probably a fact that game bird propagation in its scientific and commercial aspects has advanced farther and perceived a rosier future in America in the brief span of life of this organization than it might otherwise have done in half a century. Nine booklets on Game Propagation, Gun-club management, etc., have already been issued, and research stations are maintained.

The Foundation harmonizes with the suggestions made by Aldo Leopold in his recent *Game Survey of the North Central States*, made for the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers Institute, in the proposal that propagation shall ultimately be handed over, in well-tested and practical form, to the farmer, who is to keep his own lands stocked and garner a fat profit from the cash value of the shooting, which is to develop into a "huge industry." The Government's end is to be financed by special selective taxation on shotgun shells, which will eventually create an annual fund of seven and a half millions to be specifically apportioned by Federal law to the use of the Biological Survey, to be applied to the program. State game programs are to be run on similar lines and to be paid for by "sufficient" (which we may safely read as "*increased*") fees for state licenses.

On the face of it, ornithologists enjoy game birds more than hunters do, stand to profit by their increase, and are anxious to see farmers respect and even develop the cover on their waste land. Also many projects and policies of the Foundation are altogether admirable, such as the principle of the defeated Hawes