

man of the Local Committee, carried out the arrangements which made for the great success of the meeting, and the thoughtfulness with which Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Tyrrell looked after the interests of all who came from a distance. Second, to call attention to the very cordial invitation brought to the Union on behalf of Quebec by Mr. Adrian Falardeau, who promises to all who attend next year a very jolly time, such as made the first Canadian meeting, at Ottawa, so memorable.—HILDA W. GRINNELL.

CURRENT DISCUSSION

THE "CONTROL" OF BIRDS AS CAUSING POPULAR DISREGARD FOR THE VALUES OF BIRD-LIFE

Examination of the accompanying "exhibit" (fig. 8) will inform our readers concerning several features in the present deplorable onslaught of "economic" forces against birds as well as other wild animal life. Only one or two of these features will be given special consideration in the discussion I now undertake.

An observed tendency of human kind is to look at other associated sorts of animals, largest to smallest, those that are not directly and immediately usable for food, as *enemies*; there is in man a seemingly deep-grounded reaction to "fight Nature". "It's alive, damn it—kill it" epitomizes this primitive, unreasoning state of mind. With little doubt this innate attitude owes itself fundamentally to our early racial history, even down to pioneer times only a few years back, when people's efforts to "wrest from the soil" their livelihood were more or less frustrated by the activities of numerous competitors among other animals. Anyway, the animus against animal life is, with most men, *there*; it is innate, and operates toward blind action until and unless suppressed through the acquiring of increased intelligence and of intelligent appreciation of animal life—an understanding of the inter-relationships which obtain complexly and with usually mutual benefit in a multitude of directions among living things.

That the economic situation human-wise is now largely different from what it was in pioneer and early agricultural days has been clearly shown by Tyler in his article in the last *Condor* (vol. 33, pp. 258-259), as well as by many other writers in recent periodical literature. But the instinctive urge to practice destruction of non-"useful" animal life keeps welling up in very

many directions. I would here refer to the thoughtful essay by Mr. W. L. McAtee, on "vermin" as defined by the sportsman, in the last issue of *Bird-Lore* (vol. 33, pp. 381-384). McAtee's quoted saying of sportsmen, "What isn't game must be vermin", could be paraphrased from common remarks of the fruit-grower, the grain-raiser, and the sheep-man. An attempt to instruct in animal conservation very often brings the retort "What good is it?" Unless one can prove it positively and immediately "good", it must be bad!

Referring again to the accompanying newspaper clipping: The influence of that kind of publicity finds in most persons only unconsidered response to *approve*. Any popular regard for the values of bird-life as may slowly have been fostered by educational agencies like our schools and the Audubon societies, is quickly undermined by "economic" agencies whose activities give origin to such publicity. With huge facilities at the command of these agencies for strengthening public opinion naturally adverse to animal life, and with loyal field agents who seek to discover and to meet every local demand for "extirpation" of a supposed pest (and such "demand" readily responds to stimulation), the future for maintenance of our bird-life for its true economic, its esthetic, and its scientific, values is indeed black. If my understanding of human behavior be correct, the limit of destruction will only be reached (*if* the present policy of Federal and State "economic control" persists) when every kind of bird that is claimed to do damage anywhere will have been subjected to a degree of "control" only limited by the degree of ingenuity of salaried specialists to discover virulent poisons and effective means of feeding these to the victims.

I am tempted to refer to one more point suggested by the clipping—the ingenious "pre-bait" stage in extermination proceedings. This is also fully described by Mr. McCabe elsewhere in the present issue of the *Condor* (p. 49). In essence, this is the setting out of a feeding-table for the birds, so as to get them to coming to a given spot from far and near. *Then*, poisoned baits are put on this spot—with "wonderful" results, from the control standpoint! And this is, of course, most effective in the *nesting* season of the birds! Was there ever anything equally diabolical devised in the days of the feather trade? [Ask the National Association of

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CROP RAIDING BIRDS WILL BE EXTERMINATED

Stanislaus Officials to Open Warfare Using Poison to Rid County of Bird Pests

PATTERSON, Oct. 22.—Stanislaus county prepared today for a battle to the death against birds that prey on crops—horned larks, blackbirds and linnets.

Commander-in-chief of the warfare will be S. E. Piper of the United States Biologic survey. Assisting him will be a man to be hired by E. T. Hamlin, county agricultural commissioner, with ranchers on the firing line.

Authorization for Hamlin to employ a man to work for four or five months in the warfare was given by the board of supervisors after a committee representing the farm bureau had requested county aid. Many thousands of dollars of damage annually is caused by the birds in their attacks on fruits of all kinds, Hamlin said.

This is the way the campaign will be waged:

Ranchers will put out bait to attract the birds that do crop damage. This is known as the pre-bait period.

Then Piper and his aide will go into action by placing grains treated with poisons for the enemy. The government, Hamlin said, will furnish the ammunition after the pre-bait period. The art in the warfare lies in killing only the birds that attack crops and not those that are harmless, according to Hamlin. Heretofore, drives against blackbirds, horned larks and linnets have not been marked by success because more innocents than the open enemy were killed.

Fig. 8. REPRODUCED FROM CLIPPING FROM OAKLAND TRIBUNE, "VALLEY EDITION", OCTOBER 22, 1931. AN EXAMPLE OF THE KIND OF PUBLICITY WHICH RESULTS FROM THE ACTIVITIES OF "CONTROL" AGENCIES.

Audubon Societies!] I am assured that last spring in one orchard over 3000 California Linnets were thus "successfully" poisoned in the course of an *experiment* to "improve" methods of control!

A characteristic of birds is their mobility—as contrasted with the more or less sedentary mammals. A man may poison off all the gophers and ground squirrels on his ranch, and the population of these animals elsewhere be not immediately affected. But with birds the case is vitally different; under the "pre-bait" method of attracting birds to a given spot for poisoning, not only the individuals on the one ranch are killed, but also individuals from neighboring ranches, from school yards, from public parks, from the uncultivated lands at more or less distance away; and levy is made, in one profit-seeking interest, upon the values of those birds to many other people far and wide. This, I maintain, is pre-eminently *wrong*. The principle here done violence to is definitely recognized in many long-established relations between human beings, and it should be heeded with equal justice here. No matter what the individual profit at stake, the interests of the greatest number of the people properly must be served.

Cannot our agricultural administrators, those at least who have already committed themselves to a policy of animal *conservation*, see the situation in this light, and cease entirely from encouraging animal destruction—put an end to their program of bird-killing and at the same time apply their powerful resources for popular education toward improvement of public regard for bird life, instead of debasing it?—J. GRINNELL.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

REPORT ON BIRDS RECORDED BY THE PINCHOT EXPEDITION OF 1929 TO THE CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC. By Albert K. Fisher and Alexander Wetmore. Proceedings U. S. National Museum, vol. 79, art. 10, pp. 1-66, pls. 1-10.

The following remarks are in the nature of a personal reply to certain disputed propositions rather than a dispassionate review of this report, but they have a general application to publications of the sort that perhaps justifies their appearance in this form. The "report" is concerned with a collection of birds, some 500 specimens, from many widely scattered island localities, from Key West to Tahiti.