4

CROP RAIDING BIRDS WILL BE EXTERMINATED

Stanislaus Offieials 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 tne 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.

Dr. Fisher, who collected the specimens, supplied field notes and observations; Dr. Wetmore is responsible for the classification. The particular section in which I (the reviewer) am interested is that dealing with the Galapagos Islands. The Galapagos avifauna has been the subject of my careful study for several years past, and while naturally I make no claim to having said anything approaching the last word on this subject, I can not believe that I have gone so completely astray as would be inferred from comparison of my own conclusions with the remarks of Fisher and Wetmore. There is hardly any particular of importance in which we agree. For example, they say: "The avifauna of the Caribbean islands and that of the Pacific islands are so essentially different that for convenience the report that follows is presented in two sections, the Isthmus of Panama serving as the dividing line between the two geographic regions considered." That the Galapagos avifauna is mostly of Caribbean affinities seems to me so clearly demonstrable as to be beyond dispute, yet no hint is given even that others hold this view.

In the treatment accorded the Galapagos land birds there is inconsistency of classification that is not explained and that I can not understand. In *Geospiza*, *Camarhynchus*, and *Platyspiza*, treatment follows "that of Ridgway in part 1 of Bulletin 50 of the United States National Museum," where no trinomials are used; but in the closely related *Certhidea* and in *Pyrocephalus*, Ridgway's course is abandoned and trinomials are resorted to in a manner that it would be hard to justify.

The family that I have recently proposed, the Geospizidae, is discredited in the following words: "After due consideration of the alleged characters we are unable to find trenchant grounds for separating these [genera] from the Fringillidae"—rather cavalier treatment to be accorded the results of careful study. The proper rebuttal might be that "after due consideration" I still think I am right, but perhaps a degree of personal reputation and official position is needed to support such a stand. At any rate, since the publication of the preliminary paper in which the family Geospizidae was erected, and immediately preceding publication of the Pinchot report (too recently for citation therein), my finished study of Galapagos birds has been published, with details concerning the various disputed points above mentioned, and anyone interested is referred to that paper.

On my first reading of the Pinchot report I found a curious and pleasing archaic flavor that was puzzling until it dawned upon me that here was a lineal descendant of the publications resulting from various naval expeditions of the early nineteenth century—of the "Sulphur", the "Venus", the "Beagle", and others. These books still retain almost the first interest of their rich harvest of new facts and new species gleaned here, there, and everywhere, but it is hard to understand the point of such a report at the present time. Unless, perhaps, it is to let it be known that the United States National Museum has obtained an extremely valuable collection of birds prepared with Dr. Fisher's unrivalled skill. For it may be pointed out in passing that Dr. Fisher, if anyone, deserves the editorial encomiums in a recent issue of The Condor regarding individuals who have achieved the highest degree of skill in the technique of collecting.

The upshot of my study of this report is an emphatic query as to the extent to which one can accept the statements even of men of unquestioned attainments and ability on subjects to which we are not sure they have given careful consideration. In the present case I am prepared to dispute nearly all the statements made concerning the classification of Galapagos land birds, and to accept implicitly, on faith, everything pertaining to the taxonomy of West Indian birds. But am I not justified in being reluctant to accept unquestioned the arrangement of difficult groups from certain still other far distant islands? Is not a miscellaneous, wide-ranging report of this nature necessarily of uncertain and varying authority in different sections, where classification is concerned, however much of value may lie in the field notes accompanying the specimens?

Regarding these same field notes, Dr. Fisher describes a trick of *Larus fuliginosus*, of perching upon the head of a pelican and, when chance offers, purloining a fish from the pelican's full pouch. This same habit, in some Florida species of gull, was described and illustrated many years ago in "St. Nicholas", though I can not recall seeing it mentioned in any purely ornithological literature. It was with a most pleasant thrill that I found

one of my childhood "fables" thus verified! —H. S. SWARTH, *California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco.*

HACHISUKA'S BIRDS OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS.[1]—A pleasing color reproduction of a painting by H. Grönvold faces page 1 and illustrates three Palawan peacock pheasants in this first part of a new work on Philippine birds, which is expected to be completed in five parts.

The preface is restricted to less than three pages. Geography and climate are discussed on fourteen pages in a brief, adequate outline of physical features, climate in general, rainfall and humidity—the last illustrated by a folded unnumbered map, with the mean annual rainfall in various areas of the Archipelago clearly indicated in shades of blue.

The chapter on ornithological history reviews in easy informal style the work of the various expeditions and individual collectors connected with ornithological field work in the Philippines. Numerous extensive quotations, such as those about the field work of Steere, Everett, and Whitehead, and the author's comments, here and there, help to make an interesting chapter of a somewhat dull subject. Under Everett, page 22, the author mentions Monte Alban, so spelled by Everett, which is probably the town now called Montalban and about 40 kilometers from Manila; and "San Matteo," usually spelled with one *t*, 10 kilometers nearer Manila. Some of the notes about Dean C. Worcester, page 30, are confused. Worcester died May 2, 1924, not 1914.

The third chapter, "A short account of the author's journey to the Philippines," extends from page 53 to page 95 and is illustrated with most of the plates in this part of the book. There is also a folding map, unnumbered, of southern Mindanao showing the routes traveled by the author. Most of the plates illustrate subjects of general interest.

The notes on mammals are scattered through this chapter. The following species are noticed: *Tarsius philippensis*, page 85, and *Chiromeles torquatus*, page 87. "Cooper" is, unfortunately, printed "Hooper" on page 55. On page 66 a species of *Rhipidura* is mentioned as *nigro cinnamomea* and a few lines below *cinnamonea nigro*, neither of which is quite correct.

A bibliography, arranged by years, totals 327 numbered titles and contains many interesting annotations. There is also a short list of titles of general interest, mostly on ethnology, geography, history, and travel. Another list enumerates the author's papers.

The systematic account begins on page 150 and follows Sharpe's Hand-list as to the sequence of the families and higher groups. Both scientific and English names are provided for each species and subspecies. The synonymy is restricted to a few necessary entries. The paragraphs with side heads are Distribution, Description, Nidification, General Notes and Habits. A useful paragraph under some species lists "allied forms and their range." The following are illustrated: *Megapodius freycinet cumingi* and *Turnix sylvatica whiteheadi*, plate 23; *Gallus gallus gallus*, plate 24; *Turnix worcesteri* and *T. sylvatica whiteheadi*, heads only, unnumbered text figures. Three subspecies of *Megapodius* are recognized; namely, *M. freycinet cumingii*, Palawan, Balabac, Labuan, etc.; *M. f. pusillus* Tweeddale, the Philippines in general; and *M. f. tabon*, a new name for the birds of Mindanao. *Megapodius cumingii tolutilis* Bangs and Peters, of Maratua Island, is said to be the same as *M. f. pusillus*. *Polyplectron emphanum* Temminck is revived for the peacock pheasant. Under *Francolinus pintadeanus pintadeanus* it may be noted that the locality "Balagbagin, Rizal" should read "Balagbag, in Rizal." Five of the button quails are listed as subspecies. *Turnix fasciata nigrescens* Tweeddale, of Cebu, is revived. In a foot note, page 167, *Turnix sylvatica mikado*, from Formosa, is characterized as new.

This book is pleasing in typography and convenient in size. It promises to be of great value to anyone wishing to study Philippine birds. The author has had the great advantage of collecting many specimens of Philippine birds and then being able to work on them in the British Museum. Unfortunately, the edition is small and the price will discourage most amateurs from buying it.—R. C. MCGREGOR, *Bureau of Science, Manila, P. I.*

[1] The Birds | of the | Philippine Islands | with notes on the mammal fauna | By | The Hon. Masauji Hachisuka | [etc., 5 lines] | Part I | Pages 1 to 168 | [decoration] | H. F. & G. Witherby | 326 High Holborn, London, W. C. 1 | 16th March 1931. Super-royal octavo, 25.5 cm., pp. 68, 24 pls. (1 colored), 2 colored maps (unnumbered), 2 text figs. Received in the Bureau of Science library May 14, 1931. To be completed in five parts. Price per part 25/- net.