

founded. The whole work is attractive and readable, the photographs good, the graphs and tables clear, and the typographical errors very few. From many points of view, the paper is well worth a reader's perusal.—WILLIAM A. LUNK.

## LAND USE AND OUR AVIFAUNA

*A contribution from the Wilson Ornithological Club  
Conservation Committee*

American ornithologists have enjoyed a luxury impossible in long settled countries. We came upon a continent in which the fauna and flora were practically unaltered by man. We have had the opportunity to observe and study birds in virtually primeval conditions, and though we have lost some species by the settlement of the country, we still have available some wilderness with its original inhabitants.

It must be generally accepted now that our conservation efforts rest on land use planning. A striking problem of this kind is the future of our sage grouse. They are fairly plentiful in the western plains and are hunted as a game bird, and as you drive through the miles of sage country, it may seem that they are safe enough.

But big things are happening. There is a program of sage elimination using herbicides from airplanes. I have seen large areas treated in this way, for the purpose of encouraging grass free from competition of sage. Furthermore, the reclamation program is putting large sage areas under irrigation and hence cultivation. If the sage goes, the sage grouse go, for these birds are essentially browsers and depend on sage leaves for winter survival. Dr. Robert Patterson's exhaustive study of the stage grouse (1952. "The Sage Grouse in Wyoming," Wyoming Game and Fish Commission), clearly outlines the survival requirements of this bird and suggests an economy pattern for certain western areas that would insure the survival of the species.

Nearly 20 years ago, with several associates, I had opportunity to study the fauna of the Aleutian Islands, on behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We found that some cackling geese still nested on a few of the islands, but the big migration that used to come east and south from the Aleutians was nearly ended. Part of the destruction may have been by extensive shooting in autumn in the Pacific Coast states. But another vital reason was the fact that most of the islands had been leased for blue fox farming. Foxes were simply turned loose to multiply, and were trapped occasionally for the market. We recommended that Agattu Island, especially, and several others which contained good breeding areas, should be cleared of all blue foxes, in the hope that the remnant of this goose population, and the *migration to and from* the Aleutians, might be saved. Then came the war, and I do not know whether the foxes were ever removed.

We need to give serious attention to the problem of land use. To survive, an animal must have a place to live. There is today a hopeful movement to preserve areas in the original state. We have a system of national parks and wilderness areas. And the Nature Conservancy is concerned with preserving the smaller natural areas. There are state parks and wildlife refuges. As was stressed at one of the discussions of the Mid-Century Conference on Resources for the Future at Washington last December, this whole system needs expansion.

But we are having great difficulty in retaining what we have. As these lines are written there is a proposal in Congress to include Echo Park dam in Dinosaur National Monument in the program for water development in Utah and Colorado, and we know that the dam builders have designs on Glacier National Park and that the lumbermen

want a big slice of Olympic National Park. We are still so board-feet-minded as a nation we are having trouble keeping our wilderness areas on national forests intact.

Overshadowing all this is the present concerted move to do away with public lands in a big way. On a national scale there have been bitter fights over certain bills in Congress, and more are on the way. The operation of the present mining regulations has become a national scandal, removing, by various subterfuges, thousands of acres from government ownership. The way we are crowding the Pacific salmon into oblivion is indication of what can happen when certain financial interests invoke the sacred formula "the national economy" or "the local economy," to gain their ends.

Here, in the struggle for public land—to seize it versus to keep it—is the arena for modern conservation. Each citizen, whether a scientist or not, can serve by associating with his favorite conservation organization so as to be informed on the issues as they confront us—and then act.

We believe there are enough people who are sympathetic to conservation objectives, or would be if they knew. The problem is to reach them, and to have it understood that all must take part individually as each crisis arises.—OLAUS J. MURIE.

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