

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.

While but little wreckage remains long on Henderson, due to the cliff-encircled shores, one has but to glance at the up-turned bottom of a large ship on Ducie Island lying east of Henderson, or to read the Pitcairn Island records of the seven ships known to have been lost on Oeno Island a couple of degrees west of Henderson, to realize the probability of similar future happenings on Henderson.

For the peace of mind of THE CONDOR objector and the questioning English gentleman, I might mention that, before debarking the ruminants, I tested for three days the forbidding character of the surface configuration of the island, and then unhesitatingly decided that the possible benefit to future ship-wrecked crews would completely overbalance possible damage to the few species of animal life occurring there; and I am prepared to maintain, with further facts, if necessary, that not a single plant or animal species is destined to be exterminated by my thoroughly considered action in liberating three goats on Henderson Island.—R. H. BECK, *Suva, Fiji Islands, June 18, 1924.*

#### PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

SLATER'S SYSTEMATIC LIST OF THE BIRDS OF AFRICA.\*—A bare list of species is not generally thought of as a thing of thrilling interest. Especially forbidding might seem a list of birds of a continent which the reader had never visited, and consisting of names of species of which museum specimens, even, had never been given particular attention.

We recall Bradford Torrey's most engaging essay on "Reading a Check-list" (*Field-days in California, 1913, pp. 160-169*). Yet Torrey, in making his case so appealing, had the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list before him, and had the background of intimate knowledge of many of the species and places concerned. Let us see what an American can find of interest in a "Systema Avium Ethiopicarum."

\* Systema Avium Ethiopicarum. A Systematic List of the Birds of the Ethiopian Region. By William Lutley Slater, M.A., M.B.O.U. Prepared in conjunction with Special Committees of the British and American Ornithologists' Unions. Published by the British Ornithologists' Union and sold by Wheldon and Wesley, Ltd., 2-4 Arthur Street, New Oxford Street, W. C. 2. [London] 1924 [our copy received by purchase June 5]. Small 8vo, paper, pp. iv+304 (=part I).

In the first place, be it known, the list in question is the first offering in the projected series of bird lists, to be prepared on a standard, unified plan for the whole world. A joint committee representing both the British Ornithologists' Union and the American Ornithologists' Union has been working several years on the problem. The B. O. U. is held primarily responsible for the several Regions of the Old World, the A. O. U. for the Nearctic and Neotropical regions.

The present volume deals with the "first half of the list of the Birds of the Ethiopian Region." This Region is defined as that portion of the continent of Africa and corresponding portion of the Arabian Peninsula which lies south of the Tropic of Cancer, including also various islands in the Atlantic and Indian oceans. The system of classification adopted is based chiefly on the morphologic studies of Gadow (from the ostriches part way through the woodpeckers); and the nomenclature follows as strictly as possible the Rules of the International Zoological Congress.

The present list thus becomes of importance to an American, in that in it, we may assume, is adopted the general style of presentation which will be followed by the two American lists to be prepared for the same series in the future. The Nearctic list will supplant the present A. O. U. Check-list as the standard authority.

With regard to scientific names, very few indeed happen to be of species familiar to the reviewer. Naturally, there are very few birds that are the same in Africa and North America. The Fulvous Tree-duck is perhaps the only breeding species common to the two continents, aside from introductions. There are several other water-fowl, mostly ducks, in the migratory category.

Where there are the same genera in Africa and America we find that Slater's names differ in some cases from those authorized heretofore by the A. O. U. Committee. Since we have Slater's assurance that his manuscripts and "proofs have all been seen and approved by the committees in England and United States," we may conclude that the nomenclature of the African list will be adopted in the new American lists.† If this inference proves

† Since the above sentence was written, our confidence in this regard has been somewhat upset by reading in the July, 1924, *Auk* (p. 495) a statement by "W. S." to the effect that the proofs of the African list were not seen by the American committee!