

SPORTSMEN KILL THE GOOSE THAT LAYS THE GOLDEN EGG

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The facts collected relating to the game resources of Oregon tend to show that the sportsmen as a group are responsible for the gradual disappearance of valuable species of Oregon's game birds and fish.

Strange as it may seem, this has not come so much from open hunting and fishing seasons and too large bag limits as from faulty game policies. On account of the lack of underlying scientific principles and an effective game management plan, the sportsmen are strangling the goose that lays the golden egg.

SPORTSMEN ARE KILLING THE GOOSE THAT LAID THE GOLDEN EGG

About twenty-five years ago, the game fish, game birds and mammals of Oregon began to decrease and the funds appropriated were insufficient to protect them. Laws were passed establishing hunters' and anglers' license fees and creating a Game Fund.

At the time, this seemed to be a very fortunate plan for the protection and propagation of Oregon's game resources. The license money was kept in a separate fund and spent for the purpose for which it was collected, by officials appointed by the Governor.

Inasmuch as the sportsmen paid the license fees, they took the stand from the beginning that the appointment of game executives should come from the ranks of the sportsmen. This seemed fair at the time, but years have proved this to be a serious mistake.

In the first place, the game of the State belongs to all the people and not to any one group. The game is a state resource and should be handled for the benefit of all the citizens. Let us get a closer view of the subject.

The native trout in Oregon streams are species world-renowned for their gaminess and food flavor. The geographical position and environment of the Pacific Northwest with its ocean-fed streams have created the wonderful steelhead or rainbow trout.

The Clark trout, commonly called cut-throat, was first described by Captain William Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. This trout, like the rainbow, has a fortunate ancestral habit of part of the family migrating to the sea and developing to larger size and then returning to fresh waters to spawn.

Few people except scientists realize that this remarkable

trait of both the rainbows and cut-throats leads to the development of a strong race.

When it comes to upland game birds, Oregon is most fortunate in being the home of five species of grouse. The blue or sooty grouse, commonly called "hooter," is a remarkable game bird formerly abundant through the fir-timbered area of western Oregon. The ruffed grouse or "drummer", a typical bird of the thickets, rich red-brown in color because of the more humid belt in which it lives, was always a prize of older sportsmen. The sage hen or sage grouse, the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse similar to the prairie chicken, and the Franklin grouse or fool hen are all splendid species of the eastern Oregon country. Comparatively few years ago, the mountain or plumed quail flocked through all parts of western Oregon, and the little blue or valley quail were abundant in southern and eastern Oregon.

All these were the native game birds sought by the sportsmen of two or three decades ago. In spite of the fact that they established the reputation of the State from an outdoor recreation standpoint, they are now almost forgotten.

Years ago when the sportsmen of the State began dominating game resources, one view was naturally uppermost in mind. License money was paid with but one idea, namely, to kill game birds and mammals and to take fish from the streams. Therefore, this influenced the work of the Game Commission. When our quail and grouse began to go down, no thought was given to the causes or to helping the disappearing species. This would have required research and study. The cry of sportsmen was something to kill.

The introduction of the Chinese or ring-necked pheasant was hailed as the greatest event in the record book of sportsmen. Then

came other foreign species such as the European or Hungarian partridge, and next the attempts of the Game Commission to cross one species with another to find a new game bird. Only the real nature lover and scientist foresaw the results.

Just found in Oregon
Today no page in Oregon outdoor history has such a blank aspect as that relating to upland game birds except the page that applies to the native residents of Oregon's wonderful streams and rivers.

No state in the Union possessed finer fish resources in all her streams than Oregon. The native species of trout and salmon were known around the world as something distinctive, an integral part of a great state.

Not one angler in fifty knows the different species of trout native to the stream in which he fishes. It is safe to say that not more than one angler in twenty has any idea in mind but the number of fish in his creel.

Any student of natural history knows that a trout develops and thrives according to environment and food conditions. The history of the past twenty years shows an utter lack of study of the fundamental problems. There has been no scientific basis for protecting and conserving the native species adapted to individual streams. The sole idea has been to establish hatcheries, produce millions of fingerlings, both native and foreign, and dump them indiscriminately into the streams. The quality of the stock has been neglected.

A fish is a fish from the sportsmen's standpoint. Suppose in the livestock industry, farmers and stock owners paid no attention to breed. What a heterogeneous mass of mixed-breed chickens, sheep, cattle, and horses Oregon would have if she followed the sportsmen's plan for production of quantity with no thought of quality.

The breeding and care of stock is in the hands of students and experts. The state and the government train these in institutions to develop livestock along scientific lines. The study and breeding of stock are not governed by butchers and market owners. The sportsmen as a group pay their license fees to kill game. They lack the interest and inspiration to develop and keep up the native game resources of Oregon.

Thus the result of twenty-five years of domination of wildlife resources by the sportsmen has meant that our valuable upland game species are rapidly disappearing and that feathered game from foreign countries are taking their place. The native waterfowl with breeding, feeding, and nesting areas destroyed, are at the point where a closed season seems necessary. And since Oregon waters are the spawning beds for an increasing mass of carp, bass, crappies, shad, Lock Leven, and other cannibalistic varieties, the natives are being rapidly crowded to the wall and starved out. It is like flooding the State of Oregon with Europeans and Asiatics, who drive out the Americans.

In conclusion, the work heretofore centered in the State Game Commission may logically be divided into two parts. First is the enforcement of game laws, which is a police problem and has been governed by the sportsmen according to business methods. The second is the conservation of native fish, game birds, and mammals of the State and is an involved scientific problem. It is also an educational problem. If the license funds had been divided into two parts, one part expended by the Game Commission for the enforcement of laws, and the balance of the funds handled by the Oregon State Agricultural College, Oregon would have been much further along the road toward conserving and developing her wildlife resources and making this a great recreational state.