

As an instance of the destruction of innocent hawks under mere suspicion, there may be cited an item just published in the report of progress of an investigation of methods for increasing quail. Upwards of thirty marsh hawks were frequenting roosting places in the game covers, and about half of these were shot. Then over a thousand of the castings of the birds were examined, each representing a meal, with the result that the remains of four quail were found, while more than nine hundred meals had included one or more cotton rats, which eat the eggs of the quail. Indeed, the statement is emphasised that most of the enemies of the quail are also the destroyers of its foes. This instance illustrates the complexity of a problem which many have the assurance to settle off-hand, even when their answer means the extermination of the species under suspicion.

Hawks and other birds of prey, as well as the song birds and the so-called game birds, are all a part of Nature's wealth of life, a wealth that belongs not alone to the student of song birds, nor to the sportsman, but to all the people for all time. The ancestors of our living birds of prey have joined the extinct faunas of the world, and their passing is a part of its history. So in time will our recent species leave their bones in the rocks, and should be succeeded by other forms. We owe it to those of our race who follow us that we refrain from destroying any of these links in the chain. Yet in our treatment of many beautiful and interesting forms of wild life, feathered and furred, we are pursuing a course unworthy of a race which prides itself on its scientific knowledge. On this continent there is still a wonderful supply of wild life that is ever increasingly dear to that growing class who wish to observe it in its daily life, rather than to destroy it for sport or gain. Still, in these interests, the killing of many of our most interesting species goes on, almost without restraint, until extermination threatens. Then, all at once, some magic power of restoration is invoked, and in this blind process other equally valuable forms are swept out of existence.

Man himself, for all we now know, may vanish from earth, and give place to other organisms, perhaps some which he now despises. The past is irrevocable; the future is beyond our power to hasten or to abate. But if man's search for knowledge is to justify itself, he will not destroy these beautiful forms of life wantonly, but will protect them for the good of all, considering his neighbour.