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IS DEER EXTERMINATION A SHORT-SIGHTED POLICY?

IT was on March 6 that we flew to the South Island—our trek to the wapiti country. It would not be telling the truth to say it was an easy trip. To me it was the roughest trip that I have ever taken. From every angle nature fought back at us: the rain (although our leaders claimed we were not treated to the usual constant days of downpour), limited equipment measured by the strength of man who had to transport everything on his back while nature did its best to trap progress with snarls of dripping jungle (hens' nests they called it), swamp holes, fallen timber, old logs and branches covered by ferns set to trip us, huge boulders and rock slides, everything moss covered, still further covered by ferns, shallow and deep mountain streams to plunge through or to be negotiated by balancing across a slippery log. Fortunately our leader, one Teddy Davison, had the nose of a hunting dog as he constantly "smelled out" some old half-hidden wapiti trail that spared us many a tougher mile. I often wondered how even a wapiti could negotiate some of the places we got into and yet we often saw their old tracks.

We didn't secure any record heads. The big bulls were not in the bottoms nor in the bigger basins. However, specimens of three wapiti were collected that fitted into our requirements. During the trip our party observed 51 different wapiti mostly in mobs of five or seven. In addition to the specimens (such as antlers, skulls, hoofs and hides), we did collect much information and data as to range, feed, conditions, habits, growth, etc., concerning the wapiti herd, all of which will be of substantial interest and value to the Harvard Museum from the scientific angle. That was the major part of our mission. Our trip was a success.

But I frankly admit that personally it was a shock to us, and I believe would have been a shock to any sportsman from the United States when we were informed that only quite recently two parties had been in this national park and had taken out the skins of about 30 animals—mostly cow and calf wapiti. You see, we in the United States believe that the protection of our wapiti (elk) cows and calves is paramount and of course the killing for commercial purposes is prohibited by law. I heard also of some 20 other wapiti having been killed in that general area. While we were there five other parties were hunting somewhere else in that reservation and five more parties booked to come in at a later date. What they will kill and how many can only be determined later—whether bulls, cows, or calves. That there may be, in addition, wounded animals that get away and die is also something to consider. Can the wapiti herd stand this terrific toll and survive? I can only wonder if the present procedure is not a pretty close pattern to what proved to be so tragic in the United States.

Damage to Bush

New Zealand can produce the largest wapiti heads in all the world, yet how lightly New Zealand seems to view its outstanding possibilities. From our own

This is the concluding part of the article written by an American sportsman, H. WENDELL ENDICOTT, and passed on to us by the Minister of Internal Affairs. In it the writer pleads for the conservation of our imported game animals as a sporting and economic asset.

observation and from the opinions of those who have travelled over these ranges and who have long been familiar with New Zealand wapiti country, there is no evident destruction of the luxuriant native bush—there is abundant feed and still further territory for overflow or expansion.

I do not know how many times I have heard new-made friends and casual acquaintances speak of the destruction caused by game. On questioning them I cannot recall one individual who will admit that he or she had actually seen any consequential damage. They had secured their information only through hearsay. However, they were thoroughly imbued with the prevalent convictions. I am beginning to wonder as to the real facts.

If I were not so thoroughly impressed with New Zealand's at present privileged and unique position, viewing it as I do through the eyes of one who comes from a country which has been "through the mill," I would refrain from giving so much emphasis to these queries.

To say that we did not collect record or outstanding heads is not a criticism of what might have been furnished by the country we were in—it is rather a criticism of ourselves. The big bulls were there—yes. We saw with our glasses several that were estimated as "excellent"—one definitely so and the others "probable." But most of the wapiti were ranging in and around the topmost peaks. It was here that our

fitness was the stumbling block. It took us two hours and a-quarter to climb a quarter of a mile up from the bottom (the easiest route there was) in order to reach the rim of one of the open basins, with some four or five hours' further climbing to reach the peaks, skirt along the skyline where the bulls might be found and return to that point. In addition to it all there would have been the necessity of spending the night at timber-line with scant food and no shelter.

We couldn't have had better leaders. Any sportsman willing to have faced the rigors of this great land of fiords, and who had not been somewhat handicapped by recent physical complications, could without doubt have secured a prized and outstanding trophy of wapiti. However I cannot be unhappy in thinking of those majestic bulls who, as far as I know, are still bugling in that far away vastness of the Fiordland National Park.

To Mount Cook

The curtain on thrill and adventure by no means fell at our departure from Te Anau. Our motor trip to the Hermitage gave us one of our most memorable days. Here was another reservation, and New Zealand's adopted home of the thar and chamois.

Previously I had not known of their existence outside of Asia and Europe. I experienced an inner thrill—the hope that I might secure a trophy of each. I realised, however, that my stay would have to be very limited. If I were successful, what a story I would have to tell! What news I'd bring back that such sporting animals really existed in New Zealand! It was hard for me to believe that this country had two more wonderful additions to its wild life.

For the first day as we "worked up" towards the Tasman Glacier we spotted one chamois on the very top. For our return we waited until late afternoon so that we might watch the mountain sides at twilight time—the time they were reported to come out to feed. One chamois popped into sight at 1,000 yards—but spotted us and took off in fright. He disappeared. That was all.



CHAMOIS brought down on Mt. Cook. . . . "I did not remember having had a greater thrill . . ."

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