

WHEREAS, this generation can pass on to future generations no greater gift than these parks in their primitive condition. Therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That the American Association for the Advancement of Science earnestly requests the people and the Congress of the United States and the people and the Parliament of the Dominion of Canada to secure such amendments of existing law and the enactment of such new laws as will give to all units in the international parks system complete conservation alike, and will safeguard them against every industrial use either under private or public control at least until careful study shall justify the elimination of any part from park classification.

CIRCUMVENTING THE HOUSE SPARROW.—Many of us have experienced exasperation at Sparrows roosting in the vines on the house. Not only do their noisy debates rob the early morning hours of slumber, but they often gather in such numbers as to make a filthy mess. Another objection is that such a community grows and attracts to itself a Sparrow population that lovers of native birds would prefer to have patronize more distant localities. It is almost useless to drive them out by ordinary methods, as they immediately return, but this summer I think we solved the question of how to be rid of the pests. Being troubled with a large flock in the Virginia Creeper overgrowing the house, we went out late one night, long after dark, when each rascally little head was tucked under its rascally little wing and all were dreaming peacefully of new ways in which to make themselves objectionable. With a long pole the vines were beaten thoroughly. There was a miniature thunder of frightened wings, a few startled peeps, and the whole community vacated their comfortable dormitory and, in the dark, sought new quarters as best they could on the spur of the moment. Incidentally a large scoop net on the end of the pole caught several as they burst into it on their first dazed awakening, but that was not a necessary part of the operation. The intention had been to catch a few each night. It seemed possible that if a few were so disposed of each time the annoyance of their presence would be gradually reduced and eventually there would be one flock less in the neighborhood to monopolize bird food and bird boxes that were reserved for their betters. But, behold, the next night, on making the rounds, there was not a single Sparrow in the vines, and so it has continued ever since. Occasionally one or two individuals are routed out from the shelter, which but goes to show that vigilance is the price of other things besides safety, but does not indicate a failure. You can drive Sparrows away by day again and again only to

have them return as soon as your back is turned or even to seek the far side of the house while you are beating the near one. But at night it is different and if they feel that they are unsafe in the hours of their sleepy helplessness, it is a "better 'ole" for them. This experience may assist others in freeing their premises from the nuisances. Probably tearing their nests down or driving them from boxes at night will also be found more effective than doing so in the day time. At least one bird that was driven from a preempted box just at dusk did not return.

Another example of House Sparrow psychology was an experience we had with the species a number of years ago. There was a large flock of them in the neighborhood that winter and, as spring was coming on, it seemed desirable that something be done to thin their ranks and prevent their monopolizing all the bird boxes and nesting sites before more desirable tenants returned. Poison was advocated by one of the U.S. Biological Survey Bulletins and determined upon by us. First grain was temptingly spread daily on the hardened snow at the back of the yard. The Sparrows hailed the largess with cheeps of delight and hungry energy and were soon feeding regularly at it. Then the clean grain was replaced by the poisoned. It was scarcely out before the expectant flock began to gather on the wires and fences roundabout. But first one bird flew down before the main crowd fairly arrived and picked up a few preliminary grains. Before it was joined by more it was fluttering spasmodically over the snow. The gathering flock descended to it with many excited chirps, and followed it about in its struggles over the snow. Then it died, and the remaining birds looked at it and at each other, some said "cheep, cheep", and then all flew away—and did not return. The grain remained there until covered by the next snowfall, was replaced by more which was covered in its turn, but no flock of Sparrows fed on it. They were all about the neighbourhood, chirping saucily from nearby points of vantage, but they did not enter our garden again before spring, when the flock disintegrated and betook itself to its individual nesting duties. One or two dead Sparrows with grain in their crops were found nearby, evidently strangers, or ones that did not know or could not learn—the unfit that fell short of the standard of intelligence of the species. It seems remarkable that the sight of one dying Sparrow could instill fear of that immediate neighborhood into the whole flock and that they would remember this fear for several weeks, yet that seems the only interpretation of the facts. A few occasions like this go a long way to explain how, within a few years, the species has spread itself over the whole



continent, adapted itself to the most varied conditions, and resisted constant persecution. To-day, the factor that is finally showing some control over their numbers is not the laws passed by various legislative bodies, bounties on their heads, or poison, trap or gun, but the inevitable advance of science, the replacement of horses in our streets by automotive traction.—P. A. TAVERNER.

LOSS OF WHISTLING SWANS AT NIAGARA FALLS, 1923.—From a newspaper, dispatch, printed in Ottawa on Monday, April 2, 1923, it was learned that a number of Swans had been swept over Niagara Falls. Mr. John H. Jackson, Superintendent, Queen Victoria Niagara Falls Park Commission, Niagara Falls, Ontario, was asked for information in this connection and the following account is based upon the data he so kindly furnished.

The first of two accidents to the Swans, in 1923, occurred on Saturday, March 31st, during a heavy snow storm. Previous accidents of this kind have been described by Mr. J. H. Fleming\* and it is believed that these birds fell into the very trap he describes by alighting in the upper Niagara River, reaching the upper rapids without seeing them, because of dark, snow, or fog, and being drawn into the rapids without being able to rise from the surface.

Mr. Jackson considers that some do escape by flying at the point where they reach the rapids. The birds which are caught in the current of the rapids are drawn over the Falls; some are killed and others injured.

When this particular flock was drawn over the Falls on Saturday, March 31st, the river was filled with ice almost to the foot of the Falls, and before the Swans had an opportunity to recover from their plunge, almost all of them were swept under the ice. Nine of them did manage to reach the pack ice, but this shifted during the evening, and Mr. Jackson thinks that all the birds were lost. Because of the circumstances it does not seem possible to arrive at the total number lost on this occasion.

There were losses as well on Sunday, April 8th, but Mr. Jackson tells me that the news despatch respecting this second disaster for 1923, which stated that between three and four hundred wild Swans were killed, was grossly exaggerated. Everyone with whom he was able to get in touch and who saw the incident agrees that no such number were destroyed. Two of the Commission's Police Officers estimate that there were as many

as fifty Swans in the lower river at one time and this appears to be about the maximum lost.

One specimen only was examined by me, a fine male in the flesh, but six others were secured alive for the Jack Miner Sanctuary at Kingsville Ontario.—HOYES LLOYD.

NOTES ON THE HUDSONIAN GODWIT IN ALBERTA.—Considering the fact that the Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa hæmastica*) is now regarded as very rare, it might be worth recording that no less than 24 specimens of this species were seen and positively identified by Prof. Rowan and the writer while camping on the shores of a prairie lake in central Alberta this Spring.

The records are as follows: April 29th, 2 flocks of 6 each (also 2 Avocets on this date although on the 30th it snowed all day); May 7th, 2 Hudsonians at the lake and one with a party of Marbled Godwits at a muddy slough a few miles away; May 8th, a flock of 4 Hudsonian and 2 Marbled; May 15th, flock of 3 Hudsonian, 2 Marbled and 1 Willet; May 22, a fine male Hudsonian with 8 or 9 Marbled. One other specimen was seen flying over about May 10th.

The individuals in the parties seen on April 29th were feeding very close together like Dowitchers. Their call-note is a soft "chip" (very unlike the harsh notes of the vociferous Marbled) and when alarmed they utter a low Sandpiper-like chattering. Not a single bird was seen on dry land and most of them were wading about in water 4 inches to 6 inches deep, one bird swimming after the manner of a Yellow-legs which has waded out of its depth. Although the Hudsonian Godwits associate with the Marbled the latter bully them considerably, chasing them away if they approach the Marbled too closely when feeding. On the wing the Hudsonian Godwits are easily identified, either by the almost black undersurface of the wings or by the conspicuous white rump contrasting with the black tail, but when at rest with other waders they are much more difficult to pick out, especially if they are not in full summer plumage. When compared with the Marbled they look smaller and much darker, males in summer plumage appearing almost black at a distance. As compared with Willets, they stand with the head drawn closer in to the shoulders and of course the bill is more slender and slightly recurved, although this latter feature is hardly noticeable at a distance.

It is only in the greyer plumages that they are liable to be mistaken for Willets and then only when at rest. The bill of the female Hudsonian is practically the same length as that of the male Marbled, although both vary considerably.

Specimens measured were as follows:

*L. fedoa*, male, 3.75 inches. Female, 4.75 inches

\*Auk, XXV, 1908, pp. 306-9, and *ibid*, XXIX, 1912, pp. 445-448.





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