

of

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that die in the act

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California Snail in B.C.

as large as an European State. Re-forestation is the cry of the hour. For not only by cutting down all the trees have the people of this continent—the United States especially—killed off the birds and beasts, aye and the fishes too, but they have so dried up the rivers and streams as to impoverish the land and the result in this year of grace 1910 is that the great republic to the south of us will, for the first time in many years, cease to be an exporting nation of cereals and food-stuffs.

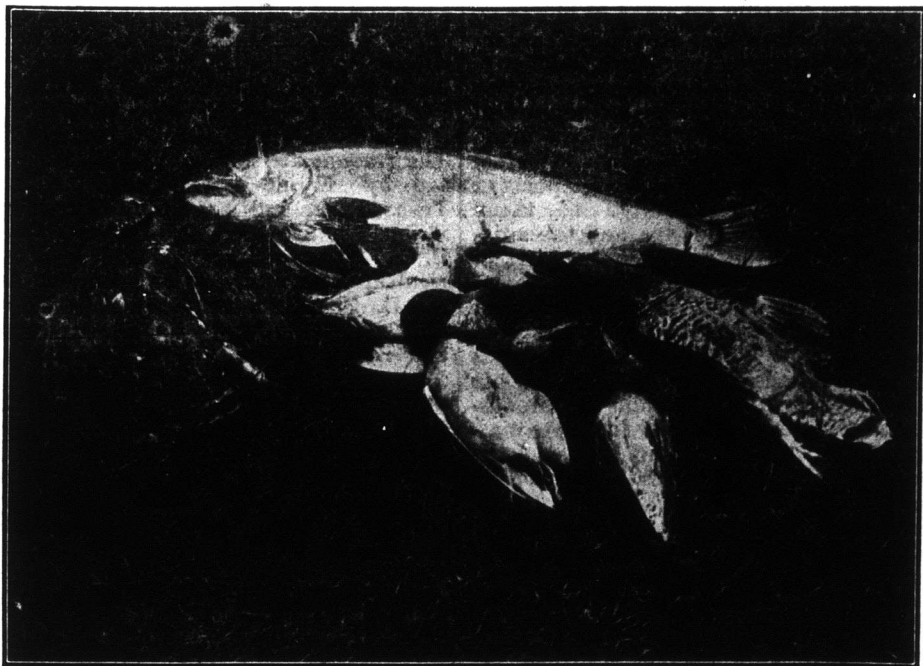
Luckily this wildly magnificent province of British Columbia, this furthest west and last to be civilized part of this mighty continent, feels least this destructive modern element. Although the lumberman and the forest fires have been unusually busy our great forests stand yet almost untouched. We own about one fifth of the standing merchantable timber of the world? so therefore our birds and beasts yet roam in their primeval solitudes in sufficient quantities to charm the eye of hunter and trapper, sportsman and fisherman. The wapiti, the moose, the goat, the sheep, the caribou and mule and blacktail and whitetail deer yet abound. But it is with the game birds I must deal. Wherever the full growth of the evergreen trees is to be found one of the grouse family is sure to be. Of course close to the cities they have suffered but the non-sale law is rapidly correcting that matter. My assistant and I find prolific birds with their peeping swiftly disappearing youngsters everywhere. The dense underbrush that covers much of the Island of Vancouver and the Mainland of British Columbia accounts for this.

One thing I would like to affirm: Nearly all the desk writing of those men that popularize their stories by charming accounts of one animal's merciful kindness to another, these men that tell of birds mending broken legs, and warring natural enemies seeking company in decrepitude is false, all false. There is one unwritten watchword of the inhabitants of the wilds—eat or be eaten. Watch carefully the deer, the mink, the muskrat, the common river rat, the wild ducks, the pheasant, the grouse, the quail. I enumerate them thus,

as my notes of telescopic observation taken lately run this way—and you will see eyes of eternal watchfulness, legs that take their owners swiftly across exposed places. Ears that are ever open to crushing vegetation or whirling wing. The whole day and night the merciful battle (I say merciful else the birthrate uneaten would speedily sweep the human family off the earth) continues. Nature, with her great munificence, breeds in such generous numbers that the immense majority must perish that the number sustaining minority may survive. Much as I love to teach the lads mercy to all animals there is no misreading the page of Nature, and if man had never disturbed it the balance would remain true, for, if in places over breeding causes overcrowding the very parasites are bred by the host to sweep off this needless mass of things.

The lad and I in our rambles see and hear with pleasure, many dusky grouse. This large, well fleshed bird loves the higher benches. It loves to roost on the upper branches of some tall fir and to throw out, with many an acrobatic motion the dull yet penetrating "hoot." It nests as early as April on the Gulf Islands and the young have been seen flying in late May. Its eggs seldom number ten. The young closely resemble young of the Leghorn—yellow with brown stripes, somewhat as in the ruffed grouse, but fuller and larger. The eggs are creamy with brown spots? although I have heard of the broods, as with the pheasant at times, I have no personal knowledge of this occurring.

Eagle and hawk, mink and marten, panther and wolf all pursue and take of the young of the grouse. The common river rat is very bad on the young broods, but worst of all is a domestic cat running wild. These deserve a well directed charge of number six. By the way, about guns. Those cursed pump and automatic guns are doing their share to sweep the earth clean of game. I have watched the Indians and Halfbreeds using them many times. The only thing to rejoice at is that his ammunition soon gives out as he shoots long before the birds are within range and long after and then cries out,



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