

fishing in the open seas, they turn their attention to the very subjects—the female seals and the young animals—which, in view of the facility with which they may be secured and of the great injury to the herds which would result from their systematic destruction, the United States government has wisely placed upon the restricted list. When the herds enter Bering Sea, about the end of June, nearly every female seal is with young. After the long voyage of two or three thousand miles through the heavy, boisterous waters of the North Pacific, they are naturally tired when they reach these breeding-grounds, and in a condition in which they are an easy prey to the unscrupulous hunter. Even if every such female seal which is killed were secured, it is clear that two seal lives would be destroyed for the sake of a single sealskin. But it is estimated that the hunter secures only one out of three or four such seals killed in the open sea, and on this basis the enormous destruction of seal life by the poachers, in proportion to the sealskins which are furnished for the purposes of commerce through their operations, may be easily estimated. Every sealskin placed upon the market by them represents the destruction of six or eight seals—an utterly unjustifiable inroad into the vitality of the herds, already small enough as a source of supply for the world.

There is the best evidence that the poachers confine themselves almost entirely to this commercially-precious female portion of the herds. It is reported that, out of twenty-five thousand sealskins which resulted from the work of those engaged in this disgraceful traffic, not one male skin could be found. This may be easily understood, for the male seal is strong and alert, and no hunter can get within shooting distance of him, as he can generally escape from the fastest boat pursuing him. And these twenty-five thousand sealskins represented a destruction of seal-life amounting to one hundred and fifty thousand! At this rate it is not difficult to estimate how long seal life can be maintained, if any number of vessels can engage from year to year in its destruction in this way during the months of July, August, and September. In two or three years most of the females would be destroyed, with their young, and in a comparatively short time the entire family would be extinguished, and specimens would be found only in the museums, as the buffaloes are found to-day.