

SCIENCE

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THE TREND OF AVIAN POPULATIONS IN CALIFORNIA

THERE is one besetting temptation to which any student fairly advanced in the exploration of his chosen field would seem justified in yielding. This temptation is to hold up to close scrutiny any striking generalization given wide publicity, save it be from the most authoritative source—to see whether it be really founded in fact. A case in point has to do with avian populations.

It has been stated or at least implied with increasing frequency in late years, in various publications, especially in those emanating from organizations concerned with bird protection, that serious decrease is taking place in our bird life, and that this decrease is due to the thoughtlessness or perfidy of man and is preventable. These statements and implications are being expressed not only with regard to the longer and more thickly settled eastern United States, but with regard to the west in general, and to California. Confessedly with some *a priori* doubt, but with a view to testing fairly the truth of these dicta, I have undertaken an inquiry into the situation in our own state, for the purpose of finding out what the facts are—of ascertaining whatever changes in our bird population may, indeed, have become apparent, and the causes therefor.

To begin with, of course, terms must be defined. In using the word "decrease," or its opposite, "increase," in this connection, one of two distinct ideas may be in a person's mind. He may refer to the *number of species*, or he may refer to the aggregate *number of individuals*. Or, both of these ideas may be held, in more or less vague association.

To take up the first concept: There is no question whatsoever that a certain few species of birds have become nearly, or quite, extinct, as far as California is concerned, within the

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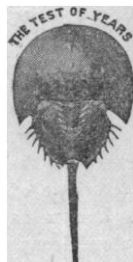
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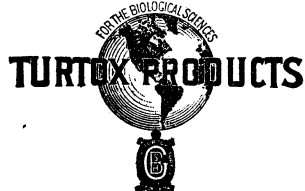
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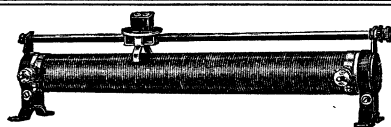
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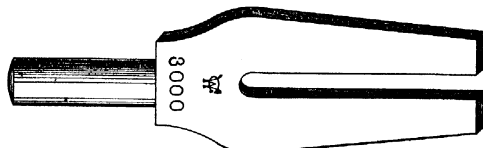
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