

ORNITHOLOGY

Drugged Foods Control Pigeon Population

► THE FIRST large-scale effort is now underway to cut down the population of those plump, messy, city-dwelling pigeons.

By feeding whole wheat grains soaked in a special drug to pigeons in two New York City West Side areas, scientists hope to prevent the production of pigeon eggs and thus reduce existing flocks of the birds.

The painless drug, one of a large group of medicines called Azo compounds, has an anti-cholesterol activity and thus prevents or inhibits the production of eggs, which are a rich source of cholesterol, said Dr. William H. Elder of the University of Missouri, Columbia, and Col. Edmond M. Rowan, director of the human works division of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Results of the trials will be observed by regular inventory of young birds in the flocks this spring and summer.

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Nature Note

Ivory-Billed Woodpecker

► THE RED-CRESTED ivory-billed woodpecker may be extinct. No one recently has reported seeing this rare bird, and ornithologists believe that the last one may have died, and the species will never be seen again.

The ivory-bill, *Campephilus principalis*, was the second largest woodpecker in the world. With a wingspan of 33 inches, it measured about 20 inches long, about the size of a crow. The birds had glossy blue-black feathers, with white wing tips, and two narrow white stripes on each side of the neck below the eyes. The male had a perky scarlet crest, while the female's crest was entirely black.

Their beautiful ivory bills were part of their destruction, for they were long considered as treasures by collectors, and Indians used to make coronets and wreaths of them, with the points outward.

Formerly found throughout the Gulf States as far north as North Carolina and up the Mississippi Valley as far as southern Ohio and Illinois, the ivory-bill used to live primarily in the great overgrown swamps, where aging trees with dying branches provided bounteous meals of wood-boring larvae.

As bulldozers and logging equipment of an expanding civilization cut out dead timber and cleared the swamps, these birds could not adapt to another environment and became scarce.

Their population began to shrink noticeably in the latter half of the 19th century, and by 1885 they were gone from North Carolina and from all areas west of the Mississippi delta except the southeast tip of Texas. By 1930 a few birds were found only in the Santee swamp of South Carolina, and in a few places in Florida and Louisiana.

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