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Science News Letter, February 16, 1946

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Winds of Hunger

► **DISASTER MENACES** the millions of cormorants, gulls, pelicans and boobies that are the living foundation of Peru's guano industry, on a group of rocky, arid islands off the coast, declares William Vogt, chief of the Pan American Union's conservation section.

Guano is formed in great quantities on the nesting grounds of these fish-eating sea birds. Every day they fly out to sea to feed, and to bring supplies home to their young. The radius of their feeding flights is limited by their flying speed and the number of daylight hours.

Normally there are plenty of fish, mainly anchovies, within this radius, for the cold, food-rich Humboldt current hugs the shore closely. About one year in seven, however, long-period changes in the prevailing winds cause this current to shift farther out to sea, taking the swarming fish-life with it. The parent birds, to insure their own survival, have to shift with it; and this means leaving the young to starve. This brings about a failure of the guano crop, which in turn causes hardship in the guano-dependent Peruvian agricultural economy.

This is the seventh year since the last seaward shift of the fish that are the raw material for guano, and already signs of trouble are appearing. On some of the islands, bird flocks are reported starting a second nesting period. This Mr. Vogt interprets as meaning that the fishing has turned bad off some of the other islands, and that the birds have deserted their nests there and are trying again on islands nearer to the shifted fishing waters.

Science News Letter, February 16, 1946

Very thin sheets of *gold* may be crimson or purple in transmitted light.



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