

WILDLIFE

Birds, Animals Are Vanishing

Man, the greatest predator, is blamed for the extinction of many species. And the extinction of many more is threatening.

By SAM MATTHEWS

➤ HUNDREDS of kinds of animals and birds threaten to become extinct as the dodo in this century. Exactly how many? No one knows.

The International Union for the Protection of Nature, an affiliate of UNESCO, names 13 birds and 15 animals as being on the bitter edge of disappearing forever from the earth.

In North America alone, Dr. Hartley H. T. Jackson of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has estimated, at least 50 wild-life races are seriously threatened.

You may never have heard of the Indian one-horned rhinoceros, the North African bubal, the New Caledonia kagou. Have you seen an Australian hairy-nosed wombat lately?

37 Whoopers Left

In Louisiana, a whooping crane nicknamed Mac was kidnapped in March. Two helicopters chased him out of a swamp and whisked him off, not to a zoo, but to a Texas wildlife refuge where Mac could be exposed to the wiles of a female whooping crane.

There are only 37 of the snow-white whoopers left in the world. Yet this tallest of America's waterfowl darkened Midwestern skies migrating north or south a hundred years ago.

Where are the American woodland caribou and the grizzly bears? And what is madame going to wear if the South American chinchilla says to man, as seems likely: "There's not enough room in the world for both of us. Goodbye."

Wherever men have brought "civilization," wildlife which was good to eat, had pretty fur or feathers, or was just fun to shoot at, met the greatest predator on the face of the earth.

"In recent times the human species has been the prime factor in the extermination of other species," says Dr. Jackson.

Short Life of Dodo Bird

There was the dodo bird. Discovered by Vasco da Gama on the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius in 1497, this swan-sized member of the pigeon family was pot-bellied, ungainly, had wings so short it could not fly, and trusted its new two-legged acquaintance. The Dutch settled the island in 1644. By 1693 the dodo was extinct.

In this country, there was the passenger pigeon. Billions of them, in fact. Then men

cut down forests in its nesting areas. They devised a net that could catch thousands of pigeons at a crack (a million were netted from one flock in Michigan in 1876). Squabs, the young birds, sold in every market. The last passenger pigeon died of old age in the Cincinnati Zoo in September 1914.

Four other American birds are gone: the great auk, the Labrador duck, the heath hen, and the only native U. S. parrot, the Carolina parakeet. Scientists think the Florida hurricane of 1937 ended the Cape Sable sparrow. No one has seen an Eskimo curlew in years, although it is thought to be still in existence.

Among animals, the Maine mink, the eastern puma, 12 types of grizzly bears, Gull Island meadow mouse, Arizona elk, bighorn sheep of the Dakotas, and the big Plains wolf are types counted as extinct.

One armor-plated brute, an Indian one-horned rhinoceros, as shown on this week's cover of SCIENCE NEWS LETTER, is one of the rarest animals living on earth. He gets all the protection he needs at Washington's National Zoological Park, but he has rubbed away his fierce nose tusk trying to get out. Others of his clan are few and far between in India, and becoming scarcer each year.

Within the last century alarmed zoologists, naturalists, and finally hunters themselves, realized what was happening. Now, when a species nears extinction, conserva-

tion is generally brought into play. Simply stated, the procedure is law plus land.

Laws Protect Species

Laws forbid or limit killing the species. Wildlife sanctuaries are provided for it. Sometimes the formula works, as in the case of the American bison or buffalo. Once down to 1,000 animals, today the buffalo population in parks, refuges and ranches in the U. S. and Canada is above 35,000.

Sometimes it does not. The species, diminished to a point where it cannot withstand natural losses, slips off into oblivion. Neither the most stringent laws nor the most frantic efforts of game wardens can save it.

Dr. Jackson wrote in a 1946 report of the Smithsonian Institution, "Once a type becomes extinct, it never reappears."

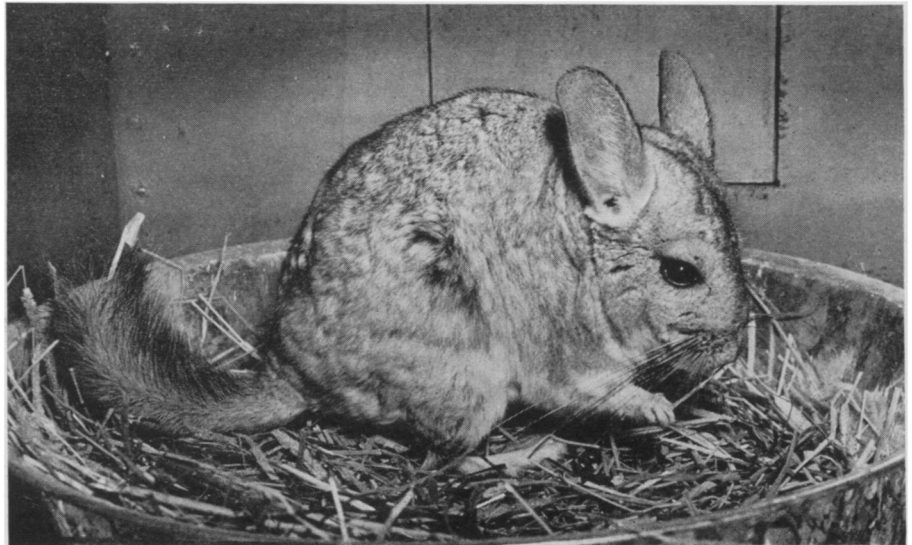
(Scientists shy away from saying flatly a particular species is gone, however. Once in a great while an "extinct" creature turns up again.)

Earth's Rarest Creatures

The International Union names as the earth's rarest creatures today:

Arabian ostrich, Hawaiian goose, kagou, Indian pink-headed duck, Australian ground parakeet, Laysan duck, Marianas mallard, Cuban ivory-billed woodpecker, Bermuda petrel, Marianas megapode, California condor, Eskimo curlew and whooping crane, among birds.

Among animals, Borneo orangoutangs, Javan and Indian rhinoceros, Asiatic lion, Burmese brow-antlered deer, giant sable antelope, North African bubal, Tasmanian



GOING, GOING!—The tiny costly chinchilla is all but gone from its native South American habitat. Sought after for its fur, it is disappearing rapidly and is even threatened with extinction.



GONE!—Despite frantic efforts by the state of Massachusetts, the last bird of the eastern heath hen species died on Martha's Vineyard in 1931.

wolf, Marsupial banded anteater, wisent, chinchilla, mountain zebra, Caribbean monk seal, Addo bush elephant, and Cuban solenodon.

Researchers such as Dr. Jackson list literally hundreds of other animals and birds becoming dangerously scarce.

A good example is the Florida Keys deer. The Fish and Wildlife Service says only 30 to 40 are still hanging on in mangrove-choked islands between Key West and the mainland.

They swim from key to key in search of fresh water. Far more dangerous than their thirst, however, are illegal hunters. These "sportsmen," some coming from as far as Cuba, set fire to the keys or put dogs ashore. Then they wait in boats for the exhausted deer to try to escape by water.

The fisher, the marten, the wolverine, the unsuspecting kit fox of the western plains, all have been trapped to near-extinction for their fur. The black-footed ferret, several types of seals, the tule elk are in the low hundreds. The Florida manatee and the crocodile are almost relics of the past in this country.

All told, wildlife experts say, more animals and birds will join the dodo in the 20th century than in any other 100-year period in mankind's records.

Science News Letter, June 10, 1950

Some *metals*, such as iron, steel and nickel, are called paramagnetic by scientists, meaning they are attracted by magnets; others are diamagnetic, which means having weak magnetic properties.

METEOROLOGY

Warmer than Normal June Over Most of Country

➤ JUNE is going to be warmer than usual over most of the nation—especially warmer in the northeast and southwest. This is the opinion of the Extended Forecast Section of the U. S. Weather Bureau in its 30-day forecast just out.

The northern Rocky Mountain states and the northern plains, however, will experience a cooler than normal June.

The dust bowl area can expect little relief. The Weather Bureau predicts less than normal rainfall in the southwest corner of the country, extending into the western edge of the dust bowl. Over the rest of the area, rains will be normal during June—but normal is not much at this time of the year.

The country's north and central plains and the Great Lakes region, will have generally abundant showery rainfall during June. This means more thunder showers than usual.

Along with its warmer than normal temperatures, the northeastern part of the country will have less rain than usual. The rest of the country can expect about normal amounts of rainfall during June.

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