

I am of the opinion, from what I have seen of him, that in this section of country at least, if not attacked by other birds the sparrow will keep the peace and live on friendly terms with them. In other words, that he will only fight on the defensive. MILTON MAY.

American Egrets.

NOTWITHSTANDING the law against killing the plume birds of Florida, the murderous work still goes on, although confined to the dense and far-away Everglades. These gruesome swamps hold many secrets; here and there the hunter and adventurer come upon refugees from justice, and here some of Uncle Sam's deserters, with pointed guns call out, "Hands up!" to the intruder, lest he be some Government detective upon their tracks. Such characters, with others equally lawless, live by the chase and upon the spoils of the herons and egrets.

As a well-known hunter of Kissimmee, on his way home from the Everglades with his alligator hides, was paddling through a dense cypress slough, he heard the clattering cries of some starving egrets. Stopping the boat, he went to the place and found that some plume hunter had been there. The ground was strewn with about a hundred carcasses of the parent birds, and represented the last of that rookery. From the tall tree tops came the cries of the little ones, whose cries appealed so strongly to the hunter that he climbed the tall trees, an almost superhuman work, and secured eight half-starved birdlings, of different sizes and ages, of big white heron, or American egret. They were brought to Kissimmee, but under the circumstances could receive but poor attention on the way in the matter of food. They were hungry little fellows, and willing to eat many things unknown to their native taste.

So difficult are these birds to capture, on account of the tall trees in which they build, that after years of efforts to secure a pair for the yard, these from the Kissimmee hunter were the first we had been able to procure.

A few words as to the oldest pair, and this brief chapter is closed. While only cartilage and skin, as the bone was unformed, and being half-starved, these birds showed a beauty in their snowy feathers and small crest and their strong piercing eyes. With almost deafening voices they would beg for food. They were male and female, and as with the great blue heron, the female was the bolder, more pugnacious and like a spoiled unruly child in her eating. The male bird was ready to eat what was presented; but she would beat her wings, shake her head and beg with a loud clattering voice, refusing to eat bread and milk because she preferred rare beef and minnows. The zoologist can never comprehend the nature of any creature by the most careful inspection of the stuffed skin. The vital nature of these baby birds became a most interesting study. Fresh from the cypress forest, belonging to the wildest of flying birds, they knew no fear, recognizing a friendship and eating from the hand, taking the finger into their mouths after the manner in which they take the beak of the parent bird. While the long, dilated throat would have its unswallowed food, the continuous qua-qua, qua-qua would keep up as long as food was in sight.

When these young birds had been on the premises a few days confined in a box a venture to try them in a small part of the yard partitioned off by wire was made. They had grown strong enough to toddle around, and a fear that the old hens might attack them kept us on the alert, till the pugnacious natures of the toddlers showed us that no care would be necessary as to attack from the hens, crane or dog. With feathers ruffled, they would extend their long necks, and with a cry intimidate any bird which approached. Even Jill, the large crane who lords it over the entire yard, turned and walked majestically away, leaving the egrets to their own domain. We found the birds creatures of strong habits, even at such an early age, for they should not have been removed from the nest for several weeks.

With the thought of the pretty picture they would make on the green lawn they were brought inside. Here they were restless, and paced up and down the wire, running up against the netting till we found they would have to be put back to their first quarters. In their efforts to get back the male hurt himself in some way, and grew more and more helpless. In this helpless state he dislocated one of the cartilage-like legs. He grew worse, but showed a tenacity of life that was marvelous. His case was pronounced hopeless, and after intense suffering he succumbed to the inevitable.

The remaining six egrets were then gotten from the hunter, who had grown tired of them and had given up all hope of rearing them, for they had been storm-beaten, fed on improper food and were so feeble that they could not hold their heads up. Every effort to feed and nurse the little creatures was put forth. In this weakened state they showed intelligence—on the approach of a stranger would qua-qua a disapproval. From the tenacity with which they held to life we hoped from day to day to raise at least a part of them. One feature noticeable was the strong, clear, shining eye that lasted as long as life with them. No strength came to them, and the end was the end of all creatures.

MINNIE MOORE-WILLSON.

KISSIMMEE, Fla.

The Belgian Hare Fad.

"Just after I came East," remarked Alexander B. Minting, of San Diego, Cal., "there was printed in the *Heard About Town* column of the *Times* a statement about the danger to agriculturists of the Belgian hare fad that has gained such a curious hold on the affections of breeders of pet animals from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The note of warning seemed almost prophetic to me when I opened my mail this morning. A letter from my son tells me that the supervisors of our county have just passed an ordinance compelling owners of Belgian hares to keep them closely confined, and fixing a penalty for turning them loose of not less than \$20 nor more than \$100. This all came about from the announcement of a woman living near me, that she would turn her hutch of about 300 of the animals loose. They had bred so rapidly and had become such a care and nuisance that she could abide them no longer. Now, the young of the hares feed

on the tender bark of young fruit trees in preference to anything else. As we are a great fruit-raising section, the loosing of a lot of Belgian hares would spell ruin for our fruit ranches. So a general protest against the turning wild of a lot of these rabbits, that breed almost faster than a man can count, followed. Belgian hares are so common out our way that people will no longer eat them, and I know one Los Angeles breeder who will give any one all the hares he can take away. Yet he paid \$1,500 for an imported buck, and \$1,000 for three does, which were the foundation stock of his hutch. Now he is doing all he can to exterminate what has come to be an unmitigated nuisance in his vicinity, as some of the young got loose and are doing all sorts of damage to fruit trees. The Belgian hare is a greater nuisance than the English sparrow. You people of the East and Middle West will so find it in a couple of years unless steps are taken to prevent the hares from running wild in the woods and fields about your cities. If the Belgian hares were allowed to propagate at will for five years there would then be more of them in the United States from their natural increase than there are of all other animals, wild and domestic combined. The market for rabbit meat is by no means unlimited, as those who breed for this market will find in a very short time. That satisfied, what are you going to do with the nuisances?"—*New York Times*.

Duel Between an Elephant and a Locomotive.

LAST Friday the first goods train from Teluk Anson to Ipoh, on nearing the twelfth mile post from Teluk Anson, was brought to a standstill by Driver Russell, who noticed a big tusker elephant in the midst of the permanent way. A grand contest then ensued between elephant and engine. The elephant repeatedly charged the engine, and this game went on for nearly an hour. The driver occasionally backed the engine, and then the elephant would stand aside from the track, but on the engine again going forward the animal would return to the track and renew its charges. The driver describes the onslaught of the elephant as most terrific, particularly on one occasion, when he feared the smoke box door had been battered in. Of course the driver could have charged at the tusker, but then the great probability would have been that the engine would have been derailed. Doubtless suffering from a sore head at the futile contest between ivory and iron, the elephant altered its tactics, and, turning its rear portion to the iron steed, endeavored to push its antagonist backward. Here came the chance for the driver, who quickly turned on steam and gradually pushed the elephant off the line, but in doing so one of the engine wheels went over the hind legs of the elephant, and thus Mr. Tusker was disabled. The goods train then proceeded on its journey, bearing evident marks of the struggle on the cow-catcher and the smoke-box. Several pieces of broken tusks were picked up, and these are commanding a good price. The passenger train was following quickly behind the goods, and Guard Fox, who was in charge, quickly let the elephant have one of his field artillery shots, and so settled the obstinate old fellow. It is remarkable to add that this same engine was the identical one that ran into an elephant five years ago on the line a little lower toward Teluk Anson.—*Perak Pioneer*, Malay Peninsula.

The White Rhinoceros.

NATURALISTS interested in the larger fauna of South Africa have for several years regarded the white rhinoceros (*R. simus*), which was found from the mouth of the Zambesi River southward, as extinct or nearly so, and, indeed, the extinction of this magnificent animal was one of the strongest arguments that was advanced to bring together the Congress which recently met for the protection of big game in South Africa. Recently, however, Major A. St. Hill Gibbons, the traveler who made the remarkable journey through Africa from south to north, killed near Lado, on the Upper Nile, a rhinoceros which he regarded as the white rhinoceros. He brought back with him the skull of the specimen, and Mr. Oldfield Thomas, of the Natural History Museum of London, confirms Major Gibbons' determination and declares the animal to be *R. simus*.

Although it has previously been reported that a white rhinoceros existed in the Upper Nile country, no specimens have been brought out and submitted to the naturalists, and the descriptions given of the animals seen and killed there were so vague that they left it quite uncertain as to what it really was.

In the notes in *Nature* in which Mr. Thomas announces this interesting discovery, he calls attention to a curious parallel to it in the discovery by Mr. W. Penrice in Angola of a zebra closely allied to the true Cape zebra, which is nearly extinct there. In the case of these zebras the species are not the same, but the relationship is close.

The October Woodcraft.

THE October number of the *Game Laws in Brief and Woodcraft Magazine* contains the game and fish laws of the United States and Canada. The Woodcraft part has this capital list of contents: GRANTHER HILL'S PARTRIDGE. By Rowland K. Robinson. IN THE FOREST. THE OLD CHANGE. THE RESCUE OF MR. HUNDLEY. KELLUP'S ANNUAL. By Jefferson Scribb. DEACON THROPE'S PIGEONS. ANY LETTERS FOR ME? By H. P. Ufford. FLORESSE ISLAND. By Olive F. Gunby. FLORIDA INDIAN DEER HUNTERS. AT CLOSE QUARTERS: The Hen, S., the Plover and the Bull; A Nova Scotia Bear; The Panther's Scram; A Time with a Florida Alligator; The Turkey Swoop; The Dog Climbed. THE DOG AND THE TURKEY. By John James Audubon. SENATOR VEST'S SUNDAY PIGEON SHOOT. AUSTRALIAN ROUGH-RIDERS. By R. Boldrewood.

Take inventory of the good things in this issue of FOREST AND STREAM. Recall what a fund was given last week. Count on what is to come next week. Was there ever in all the world a more abundant weekly store of sportsmen's reading?

Game Bag and Gun.

Proprietors of shooting resorts will find it profitable to advertise them in FOREST AND STREAM.

American Wildfowl and How to Take Them.—IX.

BY GEORGE BIRD GRINNELL.

[Continued from page 346.]

Black Duck or Dusky Duck.

Anas obscura (Gmel.).

THIS species and the two forms which are next described are closely alike, so much so that by any one not an ornithologist only a careful comparison will distinguish them. They are birds similar in size and form to the mallard, but very different in color.

The black duck is brownish-black or dusky, all the feathers edged with pale yellowish. The head and neck are streaked with yellowish. Of this there is least on the top of the head and the hind neck, which are sometimes nearly black; most on the sides of head and throat. These last are sometimes almost buff, without any streaking. The speculum, or iridescent wing patch, is sometimes metallic-green and sometimes violet, edged with black. The bill is yellowish-green and the nail dark, while the feet are orange red, the webs dusky. Length, 22 inches; wing, 11. The sexes are essentially alike.

The dusky duck, better known as the black duck, is most abundant in eastern North America. It is the commonest of the fresh-water ducks of eastern Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and the New England coast, but when it gets as far south as the Chesapeake Bay and North Carolina it finds its relative, the mallard, there in numbers as great as its own and associates with it on terms of equality.

The black duck, while feeding almost exclusively in fresh water, by no means avoids the sea coast. On the contrary, in the New England States it spends most of the day resting on the salt water and only visits the inland streams, swamps and marshes to feed during the night. In these localities it does not disdain such salt-water food as it may pick up, and in the early morning at low water I have seen great flocks of these birds feeding on the sand beaches and mud flats off Milford, Conn., where their chief food must have been the winkles that are so abundant there.

The black duck is not common in the interior, though it has been reported from near York Factory. Dr. Yarrow has reported it from Utah, but these birds were, no doubt, mottled duck (*A. f. maculosa*). I, personally, have



BLACK DUCK OR DUSKY DUCK.

not seen it west of Nebraska, and there only on a very few occasions. The specimens then noted may have been mottled ducks. It is occasionally taken in Iowa and Minnesota, but so seldom that most duck shooters do not know the species. Occasionally a man whose experience extends over fifteen or twenty years of gunning there will say that he has seen the bird two or three times. It has been reported as breeding in great numbers about forty miles north of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

In mild winters the black duck remains throughout the season in Massachusetts and Connecticut, but sometimes, if the cold is bitter and long-continued, the ice covers its customary feeding grounds, and its food becoming very scarce, it grows so thin that gunners refuse longer to kill it. At such times it sits off shore in the sea, or, if the ice extends very far out from the shore, upon the ice, and almost starves to death. We have once or twice seen birds caught in muskrat traps which were nothing more than skeletons covered by feathers.

In New England the black duck is considered one of the most acute of all our fowl, and is very difficult of approach. They often refuse to notice decoys, and, owing to their keen senses and constant watchfulness, are not shot in great numbers. The gunners believe that their sense of smell is very keen, and will not attempt to approach them down the wind, believing that the ducks will smell them.

The black duck rises from the water in the same manner as the mallard, and its note is not to be distinguished from the mallard's. In the Southern States, where they feed chiefly on grasses and rice and wild celery, they are delicious birds, but on the New England coast they are sometimes found to be very inferior table birds.

In the South the black ducks often congregate in flocks of several hundred, resorting especially to little flag ponds in the marshes which they especially affect. Here they appear to have lost much of the suspiciousness which they show further north, and often come readily to decoys, responding as easily as the mallard to the quacking of duck, man or duck-call.

More than almost any of its relatives the black duck seems to be a night feeder, and all night long its cry may be heard through the woods; yet it is, of course, well