

November 9, 1932

Mr. Aldo Leopold,  
905 University Ave.,  
Madison, Wisconsin

Dear Mr. Leopold:

Would you mind sending me the negatives from which you had made the combined photo number 20 of your Game Management text? This is the (before and after) picture in case you do not remember, which shows the cover improvement on the University Hill Farm experimental area.

I don't think that I shall try very hard, at this time, to make clear my distinction between research and demonstration areas. The one thing that I am fighting against is the possibility of my advisory work degenerating into a mere routine by which my duties become largely a matter of saying that a brush pile should be here, or a corn shock there. That is the sort of work to which I referred when I said that Bill Scheunke was as capable of handling the routine as I am. Anyway the work of a research nature will go on, of course, and many things will be tried, but there is so very much in connection with these areas that does not have to be done by me personally.

I have just had the opportunity to look over your Iowa Game Survey Report carefully for the first time. Before you publish it finally, I would like to comment upon certain points.

On page 14, of your Iowa grouse chapter you ask the question, "Of what a ruffed grouse could find to eat in the thickets of willows and cottonwoods, referring to the Missouri River jungles. Populus, as you know is a highly important ruffed grouse food in the North, and there are probably many other species which have buds suitable for ruffed grouse. I wouldn't commit myself at all to the fact that the ruffed grouse might have difficulty finding enough to eat in practically any wooded country, at all, within its range; it seems so much of a gastronomic marvel that I can hardly imagine it suffering from the food shortage any place.

In page 4 of the chapter on Iowa Waterfowl, there are a number of points upon which I would like to raise questions: First, that the most legitimate type of shooting is that which falls in the corn-field category. The mallards go to the corn fields for food. I wonder if this shooting can really be considered legitimate, then if it is enough to prevent them from feeding. You state also that a field once shot over is quickly abandoned by the birds; I wonder

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exactly how true this is. Then, again you mention that ducks will not alight in a field of white corn; granted that they prefer yellow corn, I wouldn't be too sure about the other.

Page 2 of the chapter on Game Mammals: You suggest bow and arrow hunting as a safe means of trimming down deer over populations. I wonder if critics couldn't interpret this as you asking something personal.

Page 6 of the same chapter says that the cottontails of the upper Missouri bottom are regarded as distinct species, but the line following shows that these cottontails differ only sub-specifically from those found elsewhere.

On page 10, also the chapter on Game Mammals, I think you are getting into a lot of trouble in your discussion of the fox. Your sample counts of pheasant carcasses in fox dens may be interpreted as typical areas; you do not know whether they are or not. I would strongly suspect that they represent the worst examples that came to the mind of the persons giving you the information. Bill Scheunke told me also that he thought the fox situation of O'Brien County was very much overdrawn, largely through the talk of Dr. Kas and his group who have been preaching the same thing about as far back as he can remember. I would tread with extreme discretion on the subject of foxes. Incidentally, I am trying to get a wide scale fox study cooperative project going this winter.

Last let us turn to the Conservation Movement in Iowa, chapter. In your formula near the top of page 3, I would suggest that you substitute brush for "coral berry". As now worded your sentence implies that "coral berry" constitutes ideal cover, which I am not at all sure that it does. I think that you would be safer in using the more general though descriptive term. Toward the bottom of the same page you say that a pair of wood thrushes is more valuable to an Iowa village than a Saturday evening band concert - this is what you think, and it is what I think, also - but such is only opinion and could be easily punctured by any citizen having an opinion differing from ours.

On the next page at the beginning of the last paragraph, Mrs. Stewart thinks that you really mean Alter fly Catcher instead of Trail fly Catcher.

This is about all I have to say on the report, excepting that I noticed a number of typographical errors, of which I did not take note. Of course, you will look each chapter over carefully before you send it in. Altogether, I think the report most excellently

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done. It appeals to me, particularly in most places where you drift away from tabulated facts, etc., into your smooth literary phraseology. Mrs. Stewart was very much inraptured about the manuscript; she is quite certain that you are really a poet.

I have been mainly occupied the last week in lining up quail co-operative projects and I feel quite encouraged by the reception that I have received. I will, however, know better by next spring just what can be done by cooperative observations.

Sincerely yours,

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Paul L. Errington,  
Prof. Wild Life Research