

May 31, 1933

Mr. W. L. McAtee,
In charge, Food Habits Research,
U. S. Biological Survey,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. McAtee:

My data on percentage of predation, quail population densities, etc., will be written up sometime this summer, to be published, I think, in about the December issue of the Wilson Bulletin. Of this, however, I am not sure, although Dr. Stephens has seen the material and has expressed the desire to have the final paper. I could let you have for your own use a carbon copy of the manuscript, probably by late summer, if you wished to incorporate this into your new paper on the Malthusian principle.

I yet don't know to what extend I agree with your principle of proportional predation as expressed in your Smithsonian paper. A certain amount depends upon how you would define proportional. If proportional means an increase in rate of predation on a prorated basis then your idea, according to my data, will not hold in all, or nearly all, the cases; if the rise of predation rate is progressive then we are probably in fairly close agreement.

To express this as an example: If horned owls got five quail out of a population of one hundred, assuming that the rise in predation rate would be directly proportional, ^{in the descending quail population,} they would get ten out of two hundred, fifteen out of three hundred, twenty out of four hundred, and so on. In actuality if horned owl got five out of one hundred they would be much more apt to get fifteen out of two hundred, perhaps forty out of three hundred and perhaps one hundred or more out of four hundred. This general trend is now quite substantiated by what data I have, although the figures which I am giving you in this letter are not based on actual instances and, hence, must be regarded as hypothetical, I am giving ~~them~~ merely to illustrate my point.

I received a nice letter from Seth Gordon, suggesting that I try Outdoor Life for my crippling loss manuscript. ~~Accordingly~~, I have sent it to Harry McGuire, but have not received a reply. I felt rather ashamed of the dictatorial tone that my letter to Gordon carried, and sent him another one later designed to correct any unfavorable impressions I may have made.

Very truly yours,

PLE*B

Paul L. Errington,
Asst. Prof. Wild
Life Research