

September 5, 1938

Dean E. B. Fred  
Graduate School  
Bascom Hall

Dear Dean Fred:

In 1929 Paul L. Errington, then attached to Zoology under an ammunition fellowship, started a census of quail on an area near Prairie du Sac. He personally conducted the census through 1932. In 1933 and 1934 he employed Albert Gastrow, a local woodsman whom he had trained to make the census. In 1935 the National Association of Audubon Societies donated the funds. In 1936 and 1937 I carried Gastrow out of Brittingham funds. For 1938, however, I have no funds and neither has Errington.

The census is made weekly from December to April and records the mortality and distribution of coveys as well as the total number of birds. It is now the oldest continuous intensive population record of a game bird in North America, and of course each additional year accumulates additional value for the whole record. A graph of the gross population through 1936 is attached.

In this graph can be read what is perhaps the most important research finding so far made by my division, namely the principal of compensatory predation or the so-called "Errington principle." This postulates that populations above carrying capacity are automatically cut down by an increase in the predation rate while those below the carrying capacity are automatically conserved by a decline in predation rate.

This is not the kind of research project for which I can seek support from private donors or from official departments. Such sources want to do something new and startling and have not the patience to merely maintain a scientific record.

The cost is \$200. Gastrow, by reason of this employment, loses his eligibility for W.P.A. work, which in part explains the rate.

The purpose of this memo is to call your attention to this need in the event that circumstances should make available some university research funds. I am not expecting the Graduate School to carry the thing, but I am submitting this simply on the chance that it might be able to. Failing other support, Errington and I have agreed to carry the thing personally because the enterprise is too valuable to drop.

Yours sincerely,

Aldo Leopold  
Professor of Game Management

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