

April 18, 1936

Mr. Aldo Leopold,
1532 University Ave.,
Madison, Wis.

Dear Aldo;

Your letter of April 7th with the enclosed revised "Needed Researches" "No. 2 Food Selection" has been received, but came at a busy time and I guess I am the last with my acknowledgement and comments. You really started something with this Aldo, and I am getting a big kick out of our three sided discussion. This makes it well worth the effort, and probably we ought to do more of this sort of thing.

It seems to me that your presentation is okay for use in your News Letter with such changes as have been suggested and as you would probably make when getting it into final form. I see Hattess point in objecting to your first sentence a bit, as I cannot help but feel in a general way that that the presence of food in a crop or gizzard still is evidence that it has food value with certain few exceptions. In fact my impression is that wild birds are very selective of their food, and generally eat what is good for them, even though they may not always do so. They certainly keep in rather uniformly good physical condition when they have half a chance. It is really very interesting to watch quail from a blind. They pinch and mull over their food before swallowing to an extent seldom noticeable with mammals, taste buds or no taste buds. And the way a young quail will react to a quinine paste picked into on a fellow chicks toe where it has been places to deter toe picking, certainly would indicate that something was the matter with the taste. So I support Errington suggestion regarding taste in birds (my we do get into some deep water in these discussions, dont we?)

And I claim no originality (though it is original with me-but probably there is "nothing new under the sun" after all) for the theory of chemical changes in feeds brought about by weathering. As Errington says, I discussed it with him many years ago, and with about everybody who would listen. All I claim is that there is probably something outstandingly important there; something which should be cleared up. And the more who gather facts pertaining to it, and experiment with it, the better. I firmly believe that birds can suffer for lack of suitable food for a time, even though a unlimited quantity of food which will be relished weeks or months later, surround them on all sides. There is no question in my mind that this is true of southern quail at least. Most of their foods are distinctly seasonal, regardless to a large extent of both abundance and availability. This matter has a very practical bearing in my every day work, for I may have a heck of a time convincing the preserve owning sportsmen I work with that they must have millets or grass seeds in abundance for Spring and Summer for quail and turkeys, regardless of the fact that they have a vast amount of "lospedosa" for February and March. Each is utilized very extensively for three months in the year, but very little at any other time even in extremity; the birds simply refuse to eat the available food except in its season. A most striking example is Ilex glabra (Gallberry). As far

as I have personally observed, the fruit is neglected from August until mid-winter, after which birds of the Florida "flatwoods" live on it almost entirely ~~snail~~ for a period. Robins, Bluebirds and quail are examples; their intestines are so full of the "ink" that specimen preparation becomes difficult. But what can one expect of such simple creatures when such as Homo sapiens refuse oysters during all months without an R.

Hoping that I will have the pleasure of seeing you during the summer, if not sooner, I am,

Sincerely yours,

Herbert L. Stoddard

Copies to McAtee and Errington.

P.S. I realize that the above letter is rambling and of very poor construction, with lots of mistakes. Lay it top the bird song outside, for everything is tuned up around my office to a most distracting extent. H.L.S.