

Biology Building
April 7, 1932

Mr. Charles Elton
University Museum
Oxford, England

Dear Mr. Elton:

I wish to thank you for the trouble to which you have put yourself in reading and criticizing my two manuscripts. With your efforts to get started a new bureau and a new journal, I can see that you have your hands full.

With respect to your comment on the bobwhite life equation paper I might say that I have considered the question of summer ingress and egress of quail from the observational area discussed--but that doesn't mean that I have settled it! However, the observational area had adjacent to it areas of similar environmental types with similar quail population densities. There was no more perceptible reason why any more quail should leave the area than should come in, though a great amount of shifting does take place in the summer than in winter, when for weeks at a stretch covey cruising radii under favorable conditions average about a quarter of a mile. Then, too, 150 per cent annual increase seems about the usual rate for well situated Wisconsin quail populations approaching (but not too near) the carrying capacity of the land.

I shall try to answer some of your remarks on the paper dealing with the ecological role of the predator.

In the first place, I had no intention of committing myself to any hypotheses. I frankly admit that I don't know and I doubt if anybody else does. The main point which I endeavored to bring out was that since we know of predator-prey interrelationships, it might behoove those of us who are engaged in wild life management to be careful. There is already in the United States an appalling popular prejudice against native vertebrate flesh-eaters, a sort of taking for granted that conspicuous predators (beside man and man's!) are "bad."

In the second place the manuscript was written primarily as a thesis chapter, not as an independent paper. The data supporting many of my generalizations are incorporated in other chapters and in various papers; my data pertain to winter mortality of quail and also to predator food habits have bulked up to a considerable volume. My theoretical discussion has--I hope--a justification in my thesis in that it may serve to co-ordinate some of the factual material presented.

Inclosed you will find parts of a couple pages of a manuscript on hawk food habits in which reference is made to disease in Sciuridae. I apologize for the poor quality of these data. They are but fragments picked up incidental to my regular work; I mention them merely for what they might indicate.

Again I wish to thank you for your kindness in wading through my manuscripts.

Yours sincerely,

Paul L. Errington
In Charge, Quail Investigation