

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

MADISON, WISCONSIN

DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

424 University Farm Place December 16, 1942

Professor Paul Errington

Iowa State College

Ames, Iowa

Dear Paul:

I have been working on the manuscript during the past few weeks and have had a chance to do some thinking.

I have arrived at the conclusion, not only at Prairie du Sac, but in the pheasant work that I am doing with Irv Buss, that it is going to be impossible to draw anything but speculative deductions from censuses alone. To arrive at a higher degree of certainty in deductions it is necessary to do both census and banding work simultaneously, the latter being specifically aimed at sex and age classes, particularly age classes.

For example, the inverse relationship which we have found at Prairie du Sac between the breeding populations and reproductive success and our deduction that this is caused by a depressing effect of old birds on young would be greatly strengthened if we knew the proportion of young birds during two or three years when the reproductive success varied from good to poor.

It would be further strengthened if we knew the proportion of hens that bred at all because the inverse effect might just as readily be due to non-breeding as to non-survival of young. In pheasants Irv and I hope to get at this percentage of non-breeding by shooting a large sample of hens in spring on the Arboretum where an excess must be removed anyhow. Irv is developing egg follicle criteria to distinguish breeding from non-breeding hens.

I see no chance to apply this to quail, but I do think we could determine the percentage of young birds rather easily at Prairie du Sac by two or three years' trapping and banding.

I know you have always ruled out banding at Prairie du Sac on the grounds that it might constitute winter feeding, and I have agreed. Our experience this winter, however, shows that we can trap up a whole covey of quail in only two or three days' time and with only a few days' initial baiting. The winter feeding effect could thus be made negligible. I think I could get the area pretty well trapped toward the end of the winter if you agree that it would be a good thing. My plan is to send a student out to work with Gastrow.

My thought is that this would in nowise affect the current paper except that we would give more emphasis to the facts and less to the speculative deductions from the facts. We could say that banding operations have now started to refine and sift out the tentative deductions. Whether or no we undertake this banding, this at any rate is my attitude toward the paper.

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I realize of course that you yourself regard the deductions in the paper as speculative, but I think there are at least two loopholes which the present evidence does not close: 1. The depressing effect may be due to non-breeding, and 2. It may be due to pathology. Either of these alternatives seems to me just as likely as the psychological alternative, and we should not commit ourselves too much before seeking further evidence.

Naturally I am not asking you to say yes or no to anything about the paper until I have completed the revision. All I need to know now is whether you are willing to have some banding done at Prairie du Sac. I can't yet promise that I can get it done even if you should have no objection, but I will try to.

With best regards, I
Aldo

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